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## **Eschatological prophecy in the English theological tradition c. 1700 - c. 1840.**

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ESCHATOLOGICAL PROPHECY  
IN THE ENGLISH THEOLOGICAL TRADITION  
c. 1700 - c. 1840

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of London for the degree of Doctor  
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### ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The research has been confined to scholarly exegesis in the period.

Eighteenth-century English Protestantism had inherited the belief that certain biblical prophecies referred to the entire duration of subsequent history, and that Antichrist meant Roman Catholicism, whose overthrow would occur after 1260 years from some disputed date early in the Christian era. This complex interpretation of Scripture the thesis sees as an intellectual paradigm akin to those dominant at various times in the history of science. Its prevalence is described and explained, and attention is given to its use in apologetics against rationalism, to its Romanist rivals, to Bishop William Warburton's scheme to institutionalize its defence, and to its apparent influence on the Roman exegete Bishop Charles Walmesley.

The French Revolution precipitated a process of re-examining the paradigm. Predictions of an anarchic Godlessness were discerned in the prophecies, a Godlessness influentially pronounced to be Antichrist. Unrest in postwar England, known religious scepticism, a readiness to learn from Romanist eschatology, the growth of the new historical attitude which rekindled interest in the Fathers and found the paradigm insecurely based in scholarship - these influences now promoted the idea of a 1260 days' reign of Antichrist in the future.

Eighteenth-century postmillennialist tendencies, envisaging a millennium achieved by gradual conversion of the world before the

Parousia, began to be abandoned for a revived premillennialism. The background of this change is sought in the disturbed condition of the age of revolutions, and in a new insistence on the divine initiative and immanence, together with a greater literalism in exegesis and the influence of Romanticism.

The author believes that his close analyses of the rise of futurism and premillennialism are unprecedented.



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## PREFACE

A most massive literary deposit, composed of commentaries, expositions, monographs, sermons, tracts, histories, and periodical publications, testifies with the utmost clarity that in Hanoverian England an educated interest in "the prophecies" was a strong intellectual tradition and an established aspect of culture. Scoffers and sceptics there were, and religious persons who shied away from what they regarded as merely speculative divinity; but a numerous succession of sophisticated writers continually sought in the apparently long-term biblical predictions the theological explanation (to them the real explanation) of what had happened in history, what was currently happening, and what could be broadly anticipated as likely to happen in the future. To comprehend the Georgian mind needs an acquaintance with this tradition; and so research is justified. The vast bulk of the primary material, both exhilarating and daunting, dictates, however, that the investigator should adopt a principle of selection. As the title suggests, mine has been to attend to the scholarly inquirers into prophecy, people who helped to make up the educated interest described above. I have not ventured into the areas of working-class and crankish exegesis. Further, within my chosen milieu, I have concentrated on examining, against their background, the model exegesis of eschatological the fortunes, including the vicissitudes, of/prophecy produced in the seventeenth century by the celebrated Cambridge expositor Joseph Mede. This don's work in the prophecies attained the status of what would now be called a paradigm; and, by and large, it was accepted throughout the period of the present essay, though, under the pressure of varying circumstances, it was obliged to endure interesting

modifications, and latterly, by a particular school, open disparagement. In such ways, to cite only three examples, outright religious infidelity was given an eschatological character after 1789 and incorporated into the paradigm, jostling with Rome for the historic role of Antichrist; the postmillennialism introduced in the eighteenth century was later often indignantly rejected and replaced by a highly-literalistic premillennialism; and a learned and critically-resourceful school of futurists arose to denounce the entire paradigm as the invention of enthusiasm, schism, and heresy, and as a dangerous distraction from the orientation which the Christian needed to perceive the real, the coming Antichrist of aggressive secularism.

By adopting the restrictions mentioned, I hope I have minimized duplication of the work of other researchers. I have, of course, frequently used the multi-volume pioneer book of LeRoy Edwin Froom, The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers.<sup>1</sup> International in scope, and almost encyclopaedic in scale, it remains invaluable for reference, even though it is by no means exhaustive (appearances notwithstanding) and one has to disengage Froom's materials from the black-and-white attitude and Adventist presuppositions of the author. S.C. Orchard's still lamentably unpublished study, his Cambridge Ph.D. thesis of 1969, 'English Evangelical Eschatology, 1790 - 1850', well-informed and critical, says much about the Jewish mission, which I have only just touched on, and relatively little about the political and ideological background to the eschatology, which I have attempted to furnish in some detail. W.H. Oliver's discussion, Prophets and Millennialists<sup>2</sup> which reached me when I had already written the first three chapters and was engaged on the fourth, considers some of the

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<sup>1</sup> 4 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1946-54).

<sup>2</sup> Auckland, 1978.

theologians I treat, but (like Orchard's thesis) does not give an account of the development of futurism, to which I devote an entire chapter.

I must declare that this present thesis incorporates certain items from 'The Reverend William Richards (1749 - 1818) and his Friends: a Study of Ideas and Relationships', my unpublished M.Phil. dissertation (University of Nottingham, 1973). These items, together with their locations below, are:- (1) the reference to Caleb Evans's booklist of 1773 (pages 31-2); (2) some phrases in the two-sentence passage "All educated men ... sheer fluke" (pages 35-6); (3) the short account of the evidence of deism's spread in the later eighteenth century contained in the sentence on pages 41-2; (4) Richards's expression of 1794 describing popular loyalist frenzy (page 60); (5) Richardsian invective against the Younger Pitt (page 74 n.); and (6) the quotation from Thomas Paine's The Age of Reason on page 208.

Several persons and institutions have assisted me in my work. All may be assured of my sincere gratitude, though space permits only a selection of the debts to be acknowledged here. Dr. Eamon Duffy, my first supervisor, suggested the subject and gave some valuable advice. The Revd. Professor Stuart G. Hall, my supervisor for most of the time, has not only reviewed my work in detail, but has gently kept me from straying beyond the project's practical limits. The staffs of Sion College and Dr. Williams's Libraries have been effective and kind. Miss Robin Myers, honorary archivist to the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers, organized for me a profitable morning's research at Stationers' Hall. Likewise, Mr. Roderick Walker, Librarian to the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, found me some significant materials. Generous assistance has

also come from Baptist Church House, Berkshire County Library, Berkshire Record Office, Enfield Borough Library, and the Information Centre at Leicester. Mr. Antony Witherby, publisher, gave me some help in tracking down Thomas Witherby (d. 1830). Lastly, in this doctoral thesis, as in my M. Phil. thesis of 1973, I have confidently relied upon the patience, skill, and conscientiousness of my typist, Mrs. Aileen Combe of Laleham.

JOHN A. ODDY

#### POSTSCRIPT

Preparation of this typescript was almost complete when more information was discovered as to the possible identity of one of the three Irish futurists mentioned by S.R. Maitland (see pages 117-19 below). That the first Irishman, who exerted a decisive influence on Maitland, was evidently his social superior, suggests he was William Burgh (later De Burgh), already mentioned below as possibly one of the three. Maitland's mother had brought a Gloucestershire estate to her marriage; but the pedigree officially certified for the Burghs who became De Burghs in 1848 included the justiciar Hubert de Burgh and the Conqueror's brother Robert. See (e.g.) Hubert John De Burgh's letter to Notes and Queries, 4th. series, 9 (1872), page 431, col. 2. I am indebted to Miss G. Willis, Librarian, the Church of Ireland Representative Church Body Library, Dublin 14, for providing (in litt.) a biographical account of William Burgh and confirmation that he was of this remarkable family. Burgh was made deacon in 1824, priest in 1826. He ministered mostly in Ireland, though in the late 1840s he worked in the Scottish Episcopal Church.

J.A.O.

ABBREVIATIONDNBThe Dictionary of National Biography.



## CHAPTER I

### THE GREAT PROTESTANT PARADIGM

#### A. A learned tradition: Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, and Whiston

Bishop Thomas Newton, in his good-tempered and charming Dissertations on the Prophecies (1754-8), could pay the graceful compliment, as we shall see; nevertheless, the whole book demonstrates the perfect sincerity of his reference to "the learned and excellent Mr Mede, an author always to be read with improvement, and to be corrected with reverence".<sup>1</sup> Even Bishop William Warburton, better remembered for his onslaughts than his laudations, wrote glowingly about Mede and the latter's identification of the Papacy with Antichrist: "The greatest Divine and Scholar of that Age", said Warburton, "ruined his fortune at Court by an immortal work in defence of this common Principle."<sup>2</sup> And in Richard Hurd's tenth sermon of his series preached before the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, under the terms of the Warburton Trust, this elegant, fastidious, and restrained stylist made the great seventeenth-century exegete the subject of a controlled, but an elaborate and almost vehement, encomium:

"A sublime Genius arose, in the beginning of the last century, and surprized the learned world with that great desideratum, A Key to the Revelations.... He was a candid, sincere man; disinterested, and unambitious; of no faction in religion or government, (both which began in his time to be overrun with factions) but solely devoted to the love of truth, and to the investigation of it. His learning was vast, but well chosen and well digested; and his understanding, in no common degree, strong and capacious."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dissertation I, in Dissertations on the Prophecies, which have remarkably been fulfilled, and at this time are fulfilling in the world, 3 vols. (London), vol. i (1754), p.29.

<sup>2</sup> Discourse XI, 'The Rise of Antichrist', in Works of the Right Reverend William Warburton, Lord Bishop of Gloucester /ed. Richard Hurd/, 7 vols. (London, 1788-94), vol. v. (1788), p. 451 & n.

<sup>3</sup> An Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies concerning the Christian Church; and, in particular, concerning the Church of Papal Rome (London, 1772), pp. 327-8.

Hurd shall lead us into a consideration of Mede's achievement. The Stuart scholar impressed him most of all as a disinterested empiricist whose analysis of the revelatory Book had mathematical rigour and conclusiveness:

"He had observed, that the miscarriage of former interpreters had been owing, chiefly, to a vain desire of finding their own sense in this prophesy, rather than the sense of the prophet. Laying aside, then, all hypotheses whatsoever, he sate down to the book itself, and resolved to know nothing more of it, than what the frame and texture of its composition might clearly reveal to him... [The] several sets of historical passages (or, of Visions, to speak in the language of the book itself) he carefully analyzed and compared; shewed, from circumstances, not imagined, but found in the history, their mutual relation and correspondency; and established his conclusions, as he went along, not in a loose way of popular conjecture, but in the strictest forms of Geometric reasoning. The coincident histories [which he detected], thus classed and scrutinized, he distinguished by the name of SYNCHRONISMS; and gave them to the learned world, in this severe scientific form, without further comment or illustration, under the title of CLAVIS APOCALYPTICA, or A KEY TO THE REVELATIONS." <sup>1</sup>

Joseph Mede (actually "Mead" - his editors' spelling of his name was probably derived from the Latinized form he sometimes used, "Medus") lived from 1586 until 1638. He was a Cambridge don and a polymath whose studies encompassed mathematics, physics, botany, anatomy, history, Hebrew, Egyptology, astrology, and the origin of Semitic religions.<sup>2</sup> In his writings on prophecy Mede took up a roughly-hewn exegetical scheme which had come down from the Middle Ages and been worked at during the Reformation, and he made it into a highly-impressive theological product. From Mede, broadly speaking, sprang the main scholarly tradition of prophetic study which continued to flourish, in spite of growing opposition, well into the reign of George III. (Indeed, something like it persisted even longer. In 1900, for instance, a cheap reprint of J.C. Ryle's polemical Knots Untied retained, since it was an unabridged edition, the rather

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 332-3.

<sup>2</sup> On Mede's life see Alexander Gordon in DNB (art. 'Mead').

perfectionist instruction - apropos of 1 Tim. 4:1 as "a direct prediction of the rise of that most specious form of idolatry, the worship of dead saints" - "see Mede's Works".<sup>1</sup>)

What, in outline, was the great Median interpretation ? Mede believed that the images in Daniel of the colossus and the four beasts revealed a single sequence of four major kingdoms: the Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman. The little horn that arose from the beast representing Rome was not, as others had claimed, Antiochus Epiphanes, but the Papacy; and, on the year-day principle (put into circulation by Joachim of Fiore), Mede thought that this horn would continue for 1,260 years (i.e.  $360 \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ ). Mede also advanced his famous synchronizations, as Hurd noted. The 1,260 years just mentioned are (Mede claimed) the same as, and are concurrent with, the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years ( $= 360 \times 3\frac{1}{2}$  "days") of Daniel 12:7 and the 42 months ( $= 42 \times 30$  "days") that the Gentiles tread underfoot the holy city and the 42 months during which the two witnesses prophesy and the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years' sojourn of the mysterious woman in the wilderness and the 42 months' exercise of authority by the blasphemous beast from the sea. The rise of the Papacy had started this fearful "clock", which would stop only with the Papacy's destruction and its supersession by the divine Kingdom. At this point Mede made a further novel departure. With a number of the ante-Nicene Fathers, such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, and also with J.H. Alsted (1588-1638) among Protestant scholars, he placed the millennium in the future, a total rejection of the long-accepted Augustinian teaching that the millennium had started long ago, being the period of the church until the Consummation. Mede declared that the millennium would be inaugurated

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<sup>1</sup> "People's edition", London, p. 407. The view that the Roman Church is Antichrist persists in some Protestant circles even today.

by the Second Advent of Christ. In other words Mede was a premillennialist.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the millennium would be the resurrection of those who were to reign with Christ, and at its end would occur "the universal resurrection and judgment of all the dead, when the wicked shall be cast into Hell to be tormented for ever, and the Saints translated into Heaven, to live with Christ for ever."<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the first six seals of Revelation are past: they ended with the overthrow of paganism in the Roman Empire. The first six trumpets, arisen from the seventh seal, are also past, having announced such dire events as the arrival of Alaric the Goth, the division of the Empire into ten kingdoms, the rise of Muslim aggression, and the downfall of Constantinople. The effusion of the first five vials is comprised in the time of the sixth trumpet; the seventh vial would coincide with the seventh trumpet. The first three vials included pre-Reformation and Protestant attacks on the Papacy. The fourth would be poured out on the Holy Roman Empire, and the fifth

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<sup>1</sup> A premillennialist expects that an advent, or an appearance, of Christ will precede the millennium, during which period Christ will in some manner reign on earth. It is hard to be more precise, since there have been various shades of premillennialism. In fact, Mede, in correspondence, stated that while the millennium would be inaugurated by an appearance of Christ, he would not be visible on earth during his glorious reign. See R.G. Clouse, 'The Rebirth of Millenarianism', in Peter Toon, Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology, 1600-1660 (Cambridge and London, 1970), pp. 42-65 (pp. 60-1). This difficulty of definition has been usefully commented on by Bryan W. Ball, A Great Expectation (Leiden, 1975). He says that seventeenth century radical pre-millennialists believed in a personal reign of Christ during the millennium, whereas conservative premillennialists "believed in a spiritual reign of Christ through His Saints" (p. 164). Both wings, nevertheless, "were broadly agreed on ... a personal advent, two literal resurrections preceding and following the millennium, a postmillennial judgment, and the ultimate resignation of authority to the Father for ever. Within this broad framework of agreement there were always exceptions, and it is probably better to avoid too stringent a classification of the advocates of premillenarianism" (p. 164).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Clouse, 'The Rebirth of Millenarianism', p.59; source given as Mede's Clavis (1650), compendium on Ch. 20.

on the city of Rome. The sixth would dry up the Euphrates, permitting the arrival of a new foe for the beast, namely, Israel, now converted, who would thus fall upon the beast's ally, the Turkish Empire. The seventh vial would be poured out on the power of Satan.

The present chapter will show how "Medism" continued into the eighteenth century as a dominant scholarly tradition, and what forces sustained it in this role.

Mede's most celebrated successor as an exegete in his tradition was Sir Isaac Newton. That Mede was a mathematician, that Newton was a mathematician, that Newton's successor in the Median tradition (William Whiston) was also a mathematician, and that the Roman Catholic exegete Charles Walmesley, whose interpretation of prophecy has a certain formal resemblance to the Median one, was likewise a mathematician can hardly be accidental. Scholarship of a high order in prophetic studies demanded outstanding mathematical proficiency, particularly in the establishment of chronologies, just as it demanded great knowledge of history. From one point of view, the development of Median studies is a product of the increasing weight placed upon mathematics in the University of Cambridge.

Newton approached the prophetic texts in much the same spirit as he approached the problems of astronomy and mechanics; that is, he made attempts, kept up for years, to study a vast range of theological and historical materials empirically, seeking to penetrate the secret of their inter-relationships and so to enlarge the domain of recognized truth. Certainly he had a religious aim: it was to demonstrate that God's love and wisdom and association with his creatures were best perceived not through philosophy or even theology as such, but through the fulfilment of Scripture.

There is a Newtonian MS. sentiment, quoted by Frank E Manuel,

which neatly places the great man as Median exegete. "I suspect", wrote Newton, "there are still more mysteries to be discovered. And as MrMede layed the foundation and I have built upon it: so I hope others will proceed higher untill the work be finished."<sup>1</sup> As might be expected, there are numerous agreements between Mede and the somewhat disorderly MS. published at London in 1733 by Benjamin Smith as Newton's Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John.<sup>2</sup> Newton accepts, for instance, Mede's system of synchronisms and his reading of the Danielic colossus, beasts, and little horn; and he holds with Mede that John's first six seals are past, having concerned the pagan Roman Empire - the sixth, he agrees, removed the Empire and thus revealed the Pauline Man of Sin, the Papacy. But now and again Newton posits corrections. For instance, the vials, he says, should be synchronized with the trumpets, whereas Mede had concluded that four of the vials were still to come: "Mr.Mede hath explained the Prophecy of the first six trumpets not much amiss: but if he had observed, that the Prophecy of pouring out the vials of wrath is synchronal to that of sounding the trumpets, his explanation would have been yet more complete."<sup>3</sup>

Newton contributed an elaborate, systematic discussion of prophetic imagery. "The figurative language of the Prophets .... is

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<sup>1</sup> The Religion of Isaac Newton (Oxford, 1974), p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> "Disorderly" is Frank E. Manuel's term. He says, "The number of drafts available leaves no doubt that Newton planned a magnum opus demonstrating the accuracy of the predictions in every verse in the prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse through a recounting of Judaic, early Christian, and medieval history down to the Reformation. The Observations which came through Smith's hands is a rather disorderly collection of texts. 'The Language of the Prophets', Keynes MS.5 in King's College [Cambridge], about fifty thousand words long, is a far more complete, better organized, and more consecutive narrative covering the same ground" (Isaac Newton, Historian, Cambridge, 1963, p. 150.)

<sup>3</sup> Observations, p. 295.

taken from the analogy between the world natural, and an empire or kingdom considered as a world politic."<sup>1</sup> A few examples will suffice to illustrate his scheme :

"The whole world natural consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the whole world politic, consisting of thrones and people, or so much of it as is considered in the Prophecy: and the things in that world signify the analogous things in this. For the heavens, and the things therein, signify thrones and dignities, and those who enjoy them; and the earth, with the things thereon, the inferior people; and the lowest parts of the earth, called Hades or Hell, the lowest or most miserable part of them. Whence ascending towards heaven, and descending to the earth, are put for rising and falling in power and honour: rising out of the earth, or waters, and falling into them, for the rising up to any dignity or dominion, out of the inferior state of the people, or falling down from the same into that inferior state." <sup>2</sup>

William Whiston, (1667-1752), Newton's successor in the Lucasian chair at Cambridge, was the most prolific English writer on prophecy. He too stood in the Median tradition. For him, Mede was "the Incomparable".<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, his repeated expressions of praise for Mede's work do not prevent him from attempting to refine it. In his learned, laborious, and very dull work entitled An Essay on the Revelation of Saint John, so far as concerns the past and present Times (1706), he insists, for example, that though Mede's differentiation of the prophetic contents of the Apocalypse as contained in the sealed book and open codicil is a correct principle of interpretation, Mede and his followers "have not enough examin'd into the true Import of those two distinct Systems of Prophecy; nor, I think, rightly stated their proper Limits, Object, and Difference in particular".<sup>4</sup> And so the reader learns (inter alia) that "the Seventh or last Trumpet contains the Seven Vials."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.16.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>3</sup> An Essay on the Revelation of Saint John, so far as concerns the past and present Times (London, 1706), p. 395.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.46.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.52.

Whiston's book may be admitted largely a welter of Median scholasticism, but it has at least two further aspects well worth mentioning here. They both concern chronology.

First, Whiston squarely confronts the problems posed by the prophetic time-scales: he produces evidence for the common assumption that certain prophecies mean a year when they say a day. He distinguishes between "those Prophecies of the Scripture which relate to the Jewish Church"- a MS. correction in Dr. Williams's Library's copy of this 1706 edition carefully adds "in the times of ye Old Testament"<sup>1</sup> - and "those Prophecies of the Scripture which relate to Christianity, the Times of the Messias, and the Church of the Gentiles upon the rejection of the Jews".<sup>2</sup> Prophecies in the first category "make use of a Year for that known space of time so call'd, without any covert or mystical Signification".<sup>3</sup> Genesis 15: 13 and Jeremiah 25: 11-12 are examples. Those in the second category "are cover'd and enigmatical; and make use of a Day for a Year".<sup>4</sup> "Thus", he continues, "the Jews themselves", in the case of Daniel's celebrated prophecy of the seventy weeks, "expound [it] of so many years as those weeks include days",<sup>5</sup> just as the Christian Church does. Whiston claims that this example alone ought to decide the whole matter; but he goes on to produce seven further arguments. We shall not notice all of these. One, however, is that plain statements of time in long-term prophecies might have moved people to try to prevent their fulfilment. Another is that Scripture itself sees "day" as the most fitting code-word for a year; he cites here Num. 14: 33-34. Still further, he reckons it

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.1. I should not have thought the hand necessarily Whiston's, judging by his script in a letter of 9 January 1711/12, Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 1029/116. Nevertheless, a quick check as to whether certain of the amendments were incorporated in the 2nd. edn. of An Essay on the Revelation (London, 1744) shows that they were.

<sup>2</sup> Essay on the Revelation (1706), pp. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



absurd to suppose that "those famous durations of the little Horns Tyranny, and of the Beasts with 10 Horns Dominion, and their collateral Visions"<sup>1</sup> can be measured in literal days. Yet again, the time of Anti-christ is surely not in past history !

What was the length of these years encoded as days ?

Whiston explains that

"The number of Days included in Prophetick Years is to be the same that the Computation of the Age and Nation of each Prophet does require. Thus Daniel living in Chaldea and Persia uses their year, of 360 days: and St. John living in the Roman Empire, in those places where he does not follow and explain Daniel's Numbers, uses that Empires Computation of 365, or  $365\frac{1}{4}$  days.

The particular sort of Year also refer'd to by a Day in several Prophecies, is partly to be interpreted from the same Foundation, and to be accounted by the Computation and Stile then in use, when the said Prophecies and their Periods began. Thus all those Prophecies of Daniel, which are dated from his own Times, or began while the Chaldean or Persian Stile was in use, must be suppos'd by a Day to intend a Chaldean or Persian Year of 360 days. But such as were dated long afterward, from the Roman Times, and refer intirely to them; may justly be expounded of the Roman or Julian Years. Thus also every one of the Prophecies of St. John being dated in, and wholly belonging to the Roman Times, ought to be expounded of the Roman or Julian Years upon all occasions."<sup>2</sup>

A second notable feature of Whiston's book is the author's readiness to commit himself, more than once, to the assertion that Christ's Kingdom would commence in a particular year, though, to be sure, the great event would (Whiston said) happen "long beioere the Beasts final destruction".<sup>3</sup> But the date originally given for this commencement of the Kingdom was subjected to second thoughts, and in the Dr. Williams copy of the book has everywhere disappeared under the annotator's ink, and now reads "1736",<sup>4</sup> a year which Whiston confidently allowed to be printed in the second edition.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.90.

<sup>4</sup> See, ibid., e.g. pp. 82, 84.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., p.88.

Conformably with this leaning towards explicit prediction, Whiston was deeply impressed by "our great Chronologer, and most Accurate Enquirer into these Matters, the present Lord Bishop of Worcester,"<sup>1</sup> i.e. William Lloyd (1627-1717). Well might he be, because the fulfilment, after  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, of the bishop's prediction of the restoration of the Vaudois was extremely remarkable.<sup>2</sup>

It may be that Whiston's predictions, and those made by Lloyd in his dotage,<sup>3</sup> played a small part in bringing prophetic studies into a degree of contempt; but when Whiston, in 1734, published in his Six Dissertations<sup>4</sup> a critique of Newton's Observations he not only acknowledged "that the Study of Prophecies is, among the polite World, generally in a low, or rather in an ill esteem", so that Newton "must sacrifice no small Part of his vast Reputation with very many by leaving these Papers to be printed",<sup>5</sup> but went on to condemn Newton's disparagement of attempts at further predictions: "the Folly of Interpreters",<sup>6</sup> Newton called them. The essence of the great scientist's argument was this :

"The folly of Interpreters has been, to foretel times and things

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<sup>1</sup> An Essay on the Revelation (1706), p.31.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 206-8. In the 2nd edn., pp. 241-2, Whiston gives a detailed account, using Lloyd's oral reminiscences, of the practical success of the prognostication.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Leslie Stephen, in his article on Whiston in DNB, reports that Whiston in 1746 "announced that the millennium would begin in twenty years". Lloyd, one of the celebrated Seven Bishops, was latterly a great enthusiast for the interpretation of the prophecies to predict coming events. He forecast the fiery destruction of the city of Rome for 1716. "Such prophecies, together with his attempt, in his extreme old age, to persuade Queen Anne and Robert Harley to break off peace negotiations in 1712, certainly rendered him ridiculous, and justify the verdict of Swift and Granger that he was in his dotage" (A. Tindal Hart, William Lloyd 1627-1717: Bishop, Politician, Author and Prophet, London, 1952, p.239).

<sup>4</sup> London.

<sup>5</sup> Six Dissertations, p.269.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.329.

by this Prophecy [the Revelation], as if God designed to make them Prophets. By this rashness they have not only exposed themselves, but brought the Prophecy also into contempt. The design of God was much otherwise. He gave this and the Prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify men's curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things, but that after they were fulfilled they might be interpreted by the event, and his own Providence, not the Interpreters, be then manifested thereby to the world." <sup>1</sup>

Whiston's strictures neatly display, in very short compass, his uncalculating frankness and his argumentative subtlety.

"If", he says, "any honest Christian that believes the Prophecies to be inspired, endeavours to the best of his Abilities, joined to his hearty Prayers to God for Illumination, to understand those Prophecies; and if some of those Prophecies have explicit Dates and Numbers, he cannot avoid [sic] examining into those Dates and Numbers; and this certainly without the least Pretence to his being a Prophet himself." <sup>2</sup>

And had not Newton, he asks, done the very thing condemned? The great man had, for example, supposed that the 1,260 years began about 794; and this implied that they would end about 2054.

In the same work, Whiston has other things too to say about Sir Isaac's book. He who was "by much the greatest Mathematician and Philosopher that ever was" <sup>3</sup> had relied upon what Whiston condemned as "the most imperfect of all our Copies of the Old Testament", <sup>4</sup> namely the Massoretic text, rather than call (say) Josephus to his aid. This had led him into sad mistakes, and it explained why he had made a mess of interpreting the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks. The great man had also failed to use sufficiently modern books. Again, his list of interpretations of prophetic symbols seemed less than completely plausible. He had, moreover, got the catalogue of the ten kingdoms that arose from the Roman Empire wrong; and here one has to remark that this particular argument was by no means simply academic, since these kingdoms were the

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<sup>1</sup> Newton, Observations, p.251.

<sup>2</sup> Six Dissertations, pp. 329-30.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.269.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.271.

progenitors of those who would destroy the Whore, perhaps soon. A further criticism Whiston adduced was that Newton had put forward mere conjectures as if they were assured results. In this manner he had spoilt his important contributions to chronology by bending history so as to make the year of the Passion and Resurrection Sabbatical.

Howbeit, the Observations had detected a scandal undetected by Mede. Whiston refers to "Mr. Mede's Ignorance of the Popish and Anti-christian Character of Athanasianism":<sup>1</sup> here speaks the Arian. Newton, he reports, "has throughly, and with great Sagacity traced the Affairs of the fourth Century, for the first Rise of Popery, even as far backward as the Days of Athanasius."<sup>2</sup> Whiston is also pleased to find Newton endorsing the idea of an eschatological return of the Jews. From all quarters of the Dispersion they would be gathered to build Jerusalem and the Temple with unprecedented glory.

#### B. The Median interpretation as "scientific" paradigm

It is true that modern biblical scholarship explains that the prophecies emphasized by the Median tradition (and its rivals too) ought not to be taken as detailed, long-range forecasts of subsequent history. Nevertheless, it is equally true that Mede, Newton, and Whiston would all have thought of themselves as doing science with the sacred texts. Their basic premises may well have been erroneous; but so was Joseph Priestley's premise when he tenaciously held the phlogiston theory, yet no one would thereby deny him the title of scientist. As Thomas S. Kuhn says in his important book The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, the historian has to accept that "science has included bodies of belief quite incompatible with the ones we hold today.... Out-of-date theories are not in principle unscientific because they have been

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.319.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.271.

discarded."<sup>1</sup> Kuhn, indeed, is a philosopher of science who provides students of the history of prophetic interpretation with a very useful analytical tool: the idea of a paradigm, as he terms it. From time to time, Kuhn observes, an area of science may flounder in perplexity because an existing interpretation of nature (that is, a paradigm) has effectively broken down, just as the Ptolemaic scheme in astronomy eventually did. Then some outstanding investigator - in this case Newton - at length provides a new paradigm. It is never perfect, but it brings sufficient order into the area, and particularly does it suggest the general direction which further inquiries may take. The pursuit of such further inquiries Kuhn calls "normal science".<sup>2</sup> Now, the usefulness of Kuhn's analysis to the concerns of the present essay is as follows:- With its help we can see that Mede, following closely upon the Reformers' adoption from medieval speculation and dissent, of the key notions of the prophetic time-scales as extending many centuries ahead of the prophets' own lifetimes, and of the Papacy as Antichrist, set out a paradigm, whose elaboration and refinement were carried on by Newton, Whiston, and others as "normal science". Further, the Roman Catholics and others who denied the veracity of the great paradigm, look uncommonly like members of the "competing schools that question each other's aims and standards",<sup>3</sup> which competing schools Kuhn sees as always present in "non-scientific fields", though mostly absent outside these.<sup>4</sup>

I have called the paradigm "great". This is because it covered, well enough, a very large range of evidence, both biblical and

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<sup>1</sup> International Encyclopaedia of Unified Science, 2, no.2, 2nd. edn. (Chicago and London, 1970), pp. 2-3. This application of Kuhn's ideas to the history of exegesis had already been composed when I found that they had also been used in Paul Christianson, Reformers and Babylon (Toronto, Buffalo, and London, 1978). See (e.g.) Christianson's note to p.4.

<sup>2</sup> Kuhn, op.cit., defines "normal science" on pp.23-4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 162-3.

historical; it had achieved a remarkable dominance amongst sincere, scholarly, and thoughtful men; and it offered a key to the past and present and hope for the future.

The notion of the Papacy as Antichrist seemed to satisfy whole cascades of prophecies. Bishop Newton, who presented a most useful "recapitulation" of these (Dissertation XXVI), claimed, "It is a great Daniel's, and the principal object of object of/ St. Paul's, as well as of St. John's prophecies; and these, considered and compared together, will mutually receive and reflect light from and upon each other."<sup>1</sup> Daniel had predicted the rise of a little horn, a power speaking blasphemies and persecuting the saints, a horn that would continue (on the year-day principle) for 1,260 years. There is no point in trying to deny the plausibility of seeing all this as an image of the pretensions, the arrogance, the remorselessness against dissidents that frequently characterized the age-old line which claimed spiritual descent from St. Peter. In turn, Paul had warned the Thessalonians that "the mystery of iniquity" was already working as he wrote, and, that when a certain unnamed restraining influence were removed, the Man of Sin would be revealed in all his wickedness, claiming divine honours, "so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God", and working Satanic wonders and signs.<sup>2</sup> Now, had not the Papacy risen to the status of a Danielic horn on the fall of the Roman Empire, which seemed an obvious candidate for the restraining agency which Paul had preferred not to mention explicitly? And was not the Roman hierarchy, especially the Papal part, altogether replete with sin, so that it might collectively be called the Man of Sin? "It is not easy to reckon up", wrote the learned Calvinist John Gill, bringing a particularly thorough and mordant pen to this topic,

"their impieties, their adulteries, incest, sodomy, rapine,

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<sup>1</sup> Dissertations on the Prophecies, vol. iii. (1758), p. 354.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Thess. 2 : 3-9.

murder, avarice, simony, perjury, lying, necromancy, familiarity with the devil, idolatry, witchcraft, and what not ? And not only have they been guilty of the most notorious crimes themselves, but have been the patrons and encouragers of others in sin; by dispensing with the laws of God and man, by making sins to be venial, by granting indulgences and pardon for the worst of crimes, by licensing brothel-houses, and countenancing all manner of wickedness." <sup>1</sup>

If the Man of Sin would be guilty of profane presumption, so various Popes had been. A bull of Clement V, as Gill noted, among other illustrations, had ordered the angels to take a certain category of soul "out of purgatory entirely absolved, and introduce it into the glory of paradise".<sup>2</sup> Again, had not Papal traditions blocked the operation of divine commandments ? What of the withholding of the cup from the laity, and (in apparent fulfilment of specific prophecies in Dan. 11: 37 and 1 Tim. 4: 3) the enforcement of abstention from marriage and meats ? Still further, in view of what Paul had declared concerning the Satanic wonders to be expected, was it not significant that Rome continually publicized the miracles that allegedly took place in its communion ? Yet again, the Popes lived at Rome, the ancient centre of European Christianity; therefore they sat figuratively in the temple of God, like the infamous Man. The city of Rome was indeed the harlot of the Apocalypse, drunk with the blood of the saints, while the blasphemous beast, or beasts, of that Book manifestly signified the powerful, tyrannous, slaughterous Popes.

This interpretation of history, so magnificent in scope, so emotionally-charged, and within Protestantism so satisfactory academically, provided hardly less than a great myth, a sustaining Weltanschauung for Protestantism. In the next section, I shall sketch what disturbing political and religious events continued to feed the myth, events to which it provided a key. Meanwhile, let it be noted that the paradigm

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<sup>1</sup> The last part of Gill's Expositions of the Old and New Testaments first appeared in 1766. The present citation is of An Exposition of the New Testament, 3 vols. (London, 1809), vol. iii, p.256, cols. 1-2. (On 2 Thess. 2.)

<sup>2</sup> Exposition of the N.T., vol. iii, p.257, col. 1.

explained the future as well as the past and present, and thereby gave comfort beforehand. What if, in his last days, the Beast should convulse furiously and destructively ? He was doomed, and his doom was near. Darkness lay ahead, but after it would come immense light.

### C. The paradigm and some early eighteenth-century apprehensions

The paradigm was for Protestantism and against Romanism; for Wycliffe and the Lollards, and against their persecutors; for the Marian martyrs, and against Mary Tudor; for Elizabeth I and England, and against the Pope, Philip II, and the Armada; for James I and Parliament, and against the Gunpowder plotters; for the English Church, and against James II. In the eighteenth century the paradigm also held the emotional investment of those who were for the Protestant succession, whether this was threatened by Scottish Pretenders or by Louis XIV, and for the Continental reformed Churches against their persecutors.

In the early eighteenth century there were moderate, modest, earnest, and very able men who were deeply apprehensive of the designs of the Beast. Only a fool would have called the redoubtable Thomas Bray a fanatic. He, Commissary for Maryland, founder of the S.P.C.K., and tireless promoter of education among the clergy and the laity and their children, was one such apprehensive man, however. His folio called Papal Usurpations and Persecution<sup>1</sup> has an interesting Sitz im Leben. The immediate concern was the desirability of a Protestant succession to Queen Anne. Beyond that, the context was of the wider Protestant interest, which, in turn, led on to the prospect of the complete overthrow of Rome.

On the succession issue, Bray writes,

"It is our Unhappiness, that any one of that Religion /Romanism/ should pretend to the Sovereignty over us; because, as such, instead of protecting, he would be bound to destroy us; But it is much more our Unhappiness, that any Number of Protestants should be of that Opinion, that any one of that Perswasion /sic/ is so much as capable of governing .

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<sup>1</sup> Tome i (London, 1712); no more published.



us; Since such Prince must be but a Fendatory to the Pope, and would hold his Government on that very Condition, that he should Exterminate us, and would be liable to be Depos'd himself, if he fail'd in endeavouring it; for which I need but refer to the Bulls hereafter set down, particularly that in Caena Domini, and to the Case of Protestants in England under a Popish Prince, if any shall happen to wear the Imperial Crown."<sup>1</sup>

Bray observes that there are gentlemen who think a Popish ruler capable of properly governing this country. He warns them that "he that Subjects himself to a Popish Prince, he renders himself a Subject to the Pope; since that very Prince is but the Pope's Vassal, and must govern as he pleases."<sup>2</sup>

Bray is assured by Rev. 17: 16 that "the Ten Horns which we have seen upon the Beast, or rising out of the last of the Four Beasts, and that the greatest of them all, the Roman Empire ... at length ... shall hate the Whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her Flesh, and burn her with Fire."<sup>3</sup> Hoping that "this vast Revolution in the Affairs of God's Church"<sup>4</sup> was not too distant, Bray believed that an account (as in his book) of how Rome had, "in the several Ages",<sup>5</sup> effectively taken over both the real allegiance of the subjects of the ten nations and the rights proper to their rulers, and of how Rome had used "infernal cruelty" towards any who opposed her "Attempts to dethrone God from his Dominion, and to Tyrannize over the Consciences of Men",<sup>6</sup> would, better than anything else, "prepare them, and whet their Resentments against the Babylonish Whore, in order to destroy her".<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., Preface, p.iii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.iii.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.ii.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.iii.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.ii

While Bray was composing this volume he "thought it best 'to conceal his name, because he shall depict in this history some hellish practices among the Papists, for which if he were known, he might be in danger to be treated as Sir Edmundbury Godfrey' "<sup>1</sup> Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey was the Westminster magistrate who in September 1678 had received Titus Oates's depositions about the Popish Plot and next month had been found dead, apparently murdered.

The lay associate who thus reported Bray's fear of possibly being murdered, and who shared his general apprehensions about Rome, was another learned, energetic, and sophisticated Churchman, the dedicated administrator Henry Newman, who was the S.P.C.K.'s Secretary from 1708 until his death in 1743. Newman was a New Englander, a convert to Anglicanism via the atmosphere of liberal culture and rational religion that characterized Harvard during the six years that President Increase Mather was absent and the tutors in charge were Brattle and Leverett. His biographer tells us that "Newman feared the Popish danger all his life. He warned a Swiss correspondent of 'the Tyranny of Rome, whose machinations will never be at rest to embroil all Protestant countries and this Kingdom in particular, till the Prophecies of St. John's Revelation, Chap. XVIII, are fulfilled.'"<sup>2</sup> His fears, first imbibed in New England, were stimulated by the War of Spanish Succession. He noted in 1712 the repeated arrivals in England of French priests ("those vermin French priests", he called them a year later<sup>3</sup>) and the conversions they promoted. He apprehended that some massive conspiracy was in the offing, and tried to reduce the possibility of catastrophe by unofficial, though well-organized, counter-intelligence efforts. Some Protestant

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Newman - Mr Bewick, Barrow, Leics., 23 August 1711 (S.P.C.K.'s Letters); quoted in Leonard W. Cowie, Henry Newman: an American in London, 1708-43 (London, 1956), p.27; reference on p.27n., expanded on p.263.

<sup>2</sup> Cowie, op. cit., p.30

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.28.

gentlemen, both clerical and lay, met weekly during the last three years of Anne's reign to produce information about Roman advances, and to devise measures. Newman was their secretary, and additionally he gathered for them "news about Papist activity all over the country".<sup>1</sup> As late as 1735 he thought these gentlemen's readiness to disperse once George I had safely succeeded, showed "indolence"<sup>2</sup> typical of Protestants once an immediate threat was over.

Newman's apprehensions about Romanism were continually being honed by contact with its victims, the Protestant refugees. He was one of twenty Englishmen who in 1713 gave a dinner for French Protestant confessors who had just been released from the galleys. He also knew about the plight of the Palatines who had arrived here in 1709-10, of whom over 500 still remained in 1717 in St. Botolph's parish, Aldgate, where they were unpopular with the parishioners. He helped, moreover, to administer the scheme for settling refugees from the persecution in Salzburg on land in America, which was where the Government eventually sent most of the Palatines.

#### D. Dominance of the Median Paradigm

Though, as we shall see in Chapter 2, the great paradigm had some dedicated opponents, it achieved a kind of ubiquity amongst scholarly eighteenth-century exegetes. It reappears in such standard volumes as Matthew Henry's, John Gill's, and Philip Doddridge's expositions of the Bible; presently we shall glance at these. It was tenaciously held by William Warburton, and made the theme of the lectures he instituted. (We shall discuss his provision in Chapter 2, where it will also be shown that the interpretation of prophecy along historicist lines, an idea basic to the paradigm, influenced those who might have been

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.28. (Cowie's words.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.30.

expected to ignore it, namely certain Roman writers, particularly Bishop Walmesley.)

The eighteenth-century reader of "Matthew Henry" would find little of the sting of John Gill with his haunting list of sins and crimes, and he would on some issues be given multiple viewpoints. Nevertheless, the paradigm was there. For example, on Dan. 11: 36 Henry comments, "Here some think begins a Prophecy of the Antichrist, the Papal Kingdom: And it is plain, St. Paul, in his Prophecy of the Rise and Reign of the Man of Sin, alludes to this here, 2 Thes. 2.4 which shews that Antiochus was a Type and Figure of that Enemy."<sup>1</sup> The blasphemous beast from the sea means the Roman Church.<sup>2</sup> There are direct references to Mede himself, as during the exposition of the sixth trumpet: "It is Mr. Mede's Opinion, that this [Rev. 9: 17] is a Prediction of great Guns ... These [Mede stated] were first used by the Turks at the Siege of Constantinople."<sup>3</sup> The future too looks Median. "Popery", comments the expositor at Rev. 9: 21, "is a bloody Religion, and seems resolved to continue so."<sup>4</sup>

John Gill (1697-1771) is nowadays usually remembered for the scholastic hyper-Calvinism which forbade him to preach to the ungodly.<sup>5</sup> Yet, although he was the son of poor parents in Northamptonshire, he became an important figure among the Particular Baptists, a senior pastor, an influential doctor; and for many years he ministered in the metropolis.<sup>6</sup> An interesting and somewhat double-edged tribute to his status was given

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<sup>1</sup> An Exposition of the Old and New Testament, 6 vols. (London, 1707-21), vol. iv (1712), ad loc. This vol. is unpaginated.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. vi (1721), pp. 706 (col. 2) - 707 (col. 1). (The expositor of the Apocalypse in this series was Henry's continuator and biographer William Tong.)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 701, col. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> For Gill's outlook, and on the rise of hyper-Calvinism among the Particular Baptists, see A.C. Underwood, A History of the English Baptists (London, 1947), pp. 133-5.

<sup>6</sup> On Gill's career see Thomas Hamilton in DNB.

by the evangelical Calvinist Caleb Evans of Bristol Baptist Academy, who in 1773 wrote in a booklist he had drawn up for a departing student, "Dr. GILL excels in rabbinical learning, and is, moreover, the touchstone of orthodoxy with many."<sup>1</sup>

The standpoint on prophecy taken in Gill's massive Exposition is Median, though with variations. For Gill, as for Mede, the visions in Daniel of the colossus and the four beasts betoken the successive Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. Gill explains the little horn of the latter vision as the Papacy; the little horn of Dan. 8 is Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus, however, was a type of Antichrist, and Dan. 11 not only describes Antichrist, but also his operations in east and west. In the east, Antichrist functions through the Turk; and Gill speculates that 11: 44-45, which mention a flurry of military activity before the "king's" end in the Holy Land, may mean that tidings of the return to Palestine of the dispersed Jews on their conversion may prompt the Turkish occupier of that land to advance upon them. This onslaught, says Gill, will assuredly fail: "see Ezek. xxxviii. 2-12, where the Turk, and this expedition of his, are prophesied of, and where he goes by the name of Gog."<sup>2</sup>

With Mede, Gill sees the seals as having ended with the conversion of the Roman Empire, and the sixth trumpet as having announced the rise of the Turks. Gill makes a nice distinction among the locusts of the fifth trumpet: "the western locusts are the clergy of the church of Rome"; "the eastern locusts are the Saracens."<sup>3</sup> The Pope is king of the former, Muhammad king of the latter. The time of the sixth trumpet, says Gill, includes the Reformation. The vials, the first three of which Mede saw as leading up to, and including, the Reformation, Gill

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<sup>1</sup> The booklist is printed in S.A. Swaine, Faithful Men (London, 1884), pp. 129-33, the quotation being on p.129.

<sup>2</sup> Expos. of O.T. (1810), vol. vi, p.368, col. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Expos. of N.T. (1809), vol. iii, p.752, col. 2.

puts entirely in the future, when they will be poured out to punish anti-christians. Of Rev. 13, Gill writes, "This chapter contains a description of the Romish antichrist, under the figure of two beasts, the one representing him in his civil power, the other in his ecclesiastical power."<sup>1</sup>

Gill's view includes premillennialism: "Christ being descended from heaven, and having bound Satan, and the dead saints being raised, and the living ones changed, he will reign among them personally, visibly, and gloriously, and in the fullest manner."<sup>2</sup> The duration of this period will be a literal thousand years.

When will the present order be superseded? Gill thinks that the 42 months (1,260 years) of Antichrist's reign are to be reckoned from Phocas' decree,<sup>3</sup> which he dates c. 606, giving Pope Boniface III the title and authority of universal bishop. As for the two further notes of time found in Dan. 12, Gill presumes that the extra 30 days of 12 : 11 will be occupied by events preparing for the establishment of Christ's Kingdom, notably the conversion of the Jews, and that the additional 45 (12 : 12) will see the outpouring of the vials and the general removal of Christ's enemies, so that the Kingdom may follow without impediment.<sup>4</sup>

Another influential Dissenter whose standard work included expositions of the prophecies was Philip Doddridge. He was more evangelically-minded than Gill and less ruthlessly dogmatic: here was an educator who made his students examine both the orthodox and unorthodox viewpoints. He gained a reputation for being eirenic. Nevertheless, in his Family Expositor<sup>5</sup> the paradigm reappears. The beast from the sea (Rev. 13 : 1)

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 789, col. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 847 (col. 2) - 848 (col. 1).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 766, col. 2.

<sup>4</sup> See Ex os. of O.T., vol. vi. p. 374, col. 1. (On Dan. 12.)

<sup>5</sup> 6 vols. (London, [1739]-56); vols. iv-vi ed. Job Orton.

Doddridge considers "the Papal Power, as exercised by the Bishop of Rome, supported by his regular Clergy, and by those secular Princes who have given up their Name and Power to him".<sup>1</sup> Respecting the beast who came up from the earth (13: 11), he says, "I am ready, with the best Criticks I know, to interpret this of the religious Orders of the Church of Rome, (particularly, that of the Jesuits)."<sup>2</sup> Again, Doddridge sees the 1,260 days (12: 6) as "Years of Papal Usurpation";<sup>3</sup> and is inclined to take the thousand years of the millennium literally.

Doddridge refers to another important and often-cited eighteenth-century commentator on the Apocalypse, Moses Lowman (1680-1752). A Presbyterian divine, he wrote against the deist Anthony Collins on the subject of whether Old Testament prophecies supported Jesus' Messiahship, and composed a Paraphrase and Notes on the Revelation of St. John.<sup>4</sup> It was frequently reprinted, and in Chapter 5 we shall have cause to refer to it again. Lowman too was a paradigmaticist. Thus, for him, the beast from the sea represented "the Government of Rome in the hands of the Popes",<sup>5</sup> the two-horned beast meant the Popes' clergy, and the 1,260 days signified 1,260 years' affliction of the true Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol. vi (1756), p.530n.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.534n.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.525n.

<sup>4</sup> London, 1737. On Lowman see Gerald Le Grys Norgate in DNB.

<sup>5</sup> Lowman, Paraphrase, p.128n.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PARADIGM ATTACKED AND DEFENDED

#### A. Prophecy attacked

In the earlier eighteenth century, judging from the researches presented in the foregoing chapter, the great paradigm seemed in a healthy state, attracting scholarly expositors and reappearing in standard works, and being fuelled by political and religious events and apprehensions. Nevertheless it had some formidable and implacable opponents. These were deists and sceptics, and Roman Catholics. In the ranks of the deists were those who attacked not only the usual application of the prophecies, but also the very notion of prophecy itself.

#### B Deism

There were varieties of deists, but it is true enough to say that the deist was revolted by the humourless theological perfectionism that sought to enforce its particular and often very elaborate findings by the power of fire and sword. He looked for a minimal creed which all reasonable men might subscribe. All educated men should be reasonable, at least in an age when it was now obvious that the planetary bodies orbited in ways mathematically describable in their regularity and hence open to prediction, and when it was evident that the Supreme Being who presided over this "ceaseless round" was not a capricious, arbitrary, vengeful postulate of the smoky and ignorant Hebrew mind, but a transcendent Deity, ruling (like a lawful magistrate) by reasonable principles evident by the light of nature and thus knowable by all. Who but the intolerably monkish or the pitiably enthusiastic would try to spoil this wonderful scheme by thrusting into it such barbarous follies as special revelations, bits of Near Eastern history, miraculous alterations of the working of the sublime universal mechanism, mysterious doctrines whose very proponents



admitted them incomprehensible, let alone ridiculous catalogues and time-tables of the future produced by Jewish forgery or the lunatic zeal of some other Levantines and most surely not to be credited because now and again an odd item looked correct by sheer fluke ?

Thus the Scriptures came under attack. Matthew Tindal, for example, concluded that the New Testament writers were mistaken in their belief that Christ would shortly return; and so dangerous prospects opened:

"If they were not inspir'd in what they said in their Writings concerning the then Coming of Christ; how could they be inspir'd in those Arguments they build on a Foundation far from being so ? And if they thought their Times were the last, no Direction they gave, cou'd be intended to reach further than their own Times."<sup>1</sup>

In like manner Thomas Chubb distinguished between what Jesus himself taught and "propositions" like John 1 : 1-3 which were "only the private opinion of St John".<sup>2</sup>

#### C Bishop Newton on the prophecies

The bishop's account of the inception of his Dissertations on the Prophecies, which have remarkably been fulfilled, and at this time are fulfilling in the world (1754-8)<sup>3</sup> is an indication of the spread of deistic sentiments. He tells us that his book originated from some conversations he had with Field-Marshal Wade (best known to history for his building of military roads in the Scottish Highlands).<sup>4</sup> This "great General", he says (a touch of Newtonian charm), "was a man of good under-

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<sup>1</sup> Christianity as Old as the Creation: or, the Gospel, a Republication of the Religion of Nature, 2nd. edn. (London, 1732), p.236.

<sup>2</sup> The True Gospel of Jesus Christ, Asserted (London, 1738), p.47.

<sup>3</sup> 3 vols. (London).

<sup>4</sup> George Wade (1673-1748), soldier and M.P., is not named in the first edn. of Newton's Dissertations, though the statement in the unpaginated Dedication to vol. i (1754) that he "had for many years the chief commands in the army" probably sufficed to identify him. Wade had been Commander-in-Chief Scotland, C.-in-C. the British army in Flanders, and C.-in-C. England. He was eminent enough to be buried in Westminster Abbey. (Charles Dalton in DNB.)

standing, and of some reading, but unhappily had no great regard for revealed religion or the clergy".<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, when Newton put it to him that "there were several prophecies in scripture, which were not fulfilled till these later ages, and were fulfilling even now, and consequently could not be framed after the events", Wade "was startled ... and said ... that if this point could be proved to satisfaction, there would be no arguing against such plain matter of fact; it would certainly convince him, and he believed would be the readiest way to convince every reasonable man, of the truth of revelation".<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of his book, in summary of his contention that it has been in accordance with biblical prophecies that empires have fallen, new heathen powers have emerged, and the Papal tyranny has flourished and been attacked, Newton has an apologetic passage so eloquent as to convince all but the most resourceful or rancorous of objectors:

"Men are sometimes apt to think, that if they could but see a miracle wrought in favor of religion, they would readily resign all their scruples, believe without doubt, and obey without reserve. The very thing that you desire, you have. You have the greatest and most striking of miracles in the series of scripture-prophecies accomplished; accomplished, as we see, in the present state of almost all nations, the Africans, the Egyptians, the Arabians, the Turks, the Jews, the Papists, the Protestants, Niniveh, Babylon, Tyre, Jerusalem, and Rome. And this is not a transient miracle, ceasing almost as soon as performed; but is permanent, and protracted thro' the course of many generations. It is not a miracle delivered only upon the report of others, but is subject to your own inspection and examination. It is not a miracle exhibited only before a certain number of witnesses, but is open to all the observation and contemplation of all mankind; and after so many ages is still growing, still improving to future ages. What stronger miracle therefore can you require ...? ... If the scripture-prophecies are accomplished, the scripture must be the word of God; and if the scripture is the word of God, the Christian religion must be true."<sup>3</sup>

Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the colossus and Daniel's vision of the four beasts are regarded by Newton as testifying to the same succession

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<sup>1</sup> Newton, op. cit., loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Conclusion, ibid., vol. iii (1758), pp. 427-8. For a similar line of argument see Prop. 30 in David Hartley, Observations on Man, 2 vols. (London, 1749), vol. ii, pp. 150-7.

of empires: the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman. The little horn of Dan. 7 is the Papacy. Newton considered that Mede fixed the beginning of the 1,260 years of Antichrist's power too early. Bearing in mind that the years run from the full establishment of the tyranny, not its inception, Newton is inclined to place the starting-date in the eighth century. The other little horn (Dan. 8) is the Roman empire, which has stopped the offering for 2,300 prophetic days: these "denote the whole time from the beginning of the vision to the cleansing of the sanctuary. The sanctuary is not yet cleansed, and consequently these years are not yet expired."<sup>1</sup>

According to Newton, the first six seals in the Book of Revelation describe the Roman empire from the conquest of Judaea by Vespasian and Titus to the processes of the subversion of heathenism and the establishment of Christianity, begun by Constantine. The seventh seal comprises seven periods, each distinguished by the sounding of one of the seven trumpets. The first four trumpets denote the disasters that befell the later empire: the incursions of barbarians and the reduction of Italy to a province of the eastern empire. The fifth and sixth signal the rise of Islam and the depredations of the Saracens, culminating in the eastern empire's collapse.

The Gentiles who, in Rev. 11, have occupied the outer court of the Temple, are nominal Christians; and the two witnesses represent the whole line of witnesses to religious truth. The first beast of Rev. 13 is the same as Daniel's fourth beast, and is the Roman state in general. The second beast means the Roman Church, and the impostures described resemble those of the Man of Sin in 2 Thess. 2.

Newton believed that he could indicate the prophetic situation in which he and his contemporaries were living:

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<sup>1</sup> Newton, op. cit., Diss. XV, vol. i (1754), pp. 55-6.

"At this present time we are living under the sixth trumpet, and the second woe; (Rev. XI) the Othman empire is still subsisting, the beast is still reigning, and there are protestant witnesses still prophesying in sackcloth: and this sixth trumpet and second woe must end, before the seventh trumpet can sound, or the third woe be poured out, which is to fall upon the kingdom of the beast. But before the end of the second woe, it should seem that the papists will make a great and successful effort against the protestant religion."<sup>1</sup>

For, before the end of the second woe, the witnesses will be slain and resurrected. It appears, further, that, at the time of the fall of Antichrist, Ottoman power would also collapse, probably in opposing the settlement of the Jews (having been converted to Christianity) in their own land. To the same general period would belong the start of the millennium: "It is, I conceive, to these great events, the fall of Antichrist, the restoration of the Jews, and the beginning of the glorious millennium, that the three different dates in Daniel of 1260 years, 1290 years, and 1335 years, are to be referred."<sup>2</sup>

Newton goes to some pains to defend the idea of a literal millennium, held moderately. Both friends and enemies of the doctrine, he says, have managed to bring it into contempt. Some of its friends, writers both Jewish and Christian, have treated the millennial kingdom fabulously and unspiritually; and it had also "been made an engin of faction" and associated with "turbulent fanatics, under the pretence of saints".<sup>3</sup> As for its enemies, "many, like ... Jerome, have charged the millennarians with absurd and impious opinions which they never held; and, rather than they would admit the truth of the doctrin, they have not scrupled to call in question the genuineness of the Revelation."<sup>4</sup> Rome, of course, has had a particular interest in subverting the doctrine, "the kingdom of Christ being founded on the ruins of the kingdom of Antichrist".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Diss. XXVI, ibid., vol. iii (1758) p. 385.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 393.

<sup>3</sup> Diss. XXV, ibid., p. 326.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Looking beyond the millennium, Newton is inclined to conclude that the Gog and Magog who launch the impious onslaught described in Rev. 20 : 8-9 are different from those in Ezekiel (who seem to be Turks) and are named mystically: "the last enemies of the Christian church are so denominated, because Gog and Magog appear to be the last enemies of the Jewish nation. Who they shall be, we cannot pretend to say with any the least degree of certainty."<sup>1</sup>

The subject of Bishop Newton came up in a conversation of 1784 between Dr. Johnson (his fellow-Lichfieldian) and the Master of Pembroke College, Oxford, Dr. Adams. The latter remarked, "I believe his Dissertations on the Prophecies is his great work".<sup>2</sup> Johnson, nettled by the memory of the prelate's posthumously- published censure of what he considered the "malevolence" evident throughout The Lives of the Poets, replied, "Why, Sir, it is Tom's great work; but how far it is great, or how much of it is Tom's, are other questions. I fancy a considerable part of it was borrowed."<sup>3</sup> But any work that was basically in Mede's tradition would look fairly unoriginal by the 1750s. It also seems to me that Boswell was strictly correct when he noted that the bishop's "labours were certainly of considerable advantage both to literature and religion".<sup>4</sup> The Dissertations were elegantly written and interesting to read; they were often reprinted; and they proved forceful enough to convert the young John Henry Newman to the belief that the Papacy was Antichrist, as well as to a lifelong awareness of biblical prophecy. "Newton", writes Meriol Trevor, "deeply impressed on Newman's mind the idea of Prophecy in religion - intuitive insight into the divine scheme."<sup>5</sup> Certainly, it is nowadays not enough merely

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.330.

<sup>2</sup> James Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. R.W. Chapman, 3rd. edn., corrected by J.D. Fleeman (London, 1970), p.1286.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 1286-7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 1286n.

<sup>5</sup> Newman: The Pillar of the Cloud (London, 1962), p.18.

to agree with Sir Leslie Stephen's nineteenth-century view that Newton's book was wide open to the assaults of historical criticism, or simply endorse Stephen's brief admission that it "edified a later [i.e. post-Anthony Collins] generation of believers".<sup>1</sup> We now realize that it has to be seen in the context of the development of the Median paradigm, that carrier of so many personal and national fears and aspirations, and of so much scholarship. In the sense that Newton constructed for his times a relevant, standard, respected, and very influential follow-up to Mede's old work, his exertions were indeed advantageous to English Protestantism. Again, he was easily the most considerable paradigmaticist of his century, "the focus", as William Girdlestone put it in 1820, "to which all the rays of his predecessors have converged, and from which those of his successors have diverged".<sup>2</sup>

#### D The Warburton Trust

Deism, like Romanism, declined to disappear. Burke's well-known assertion in his Reflections<sup>3</sup> that the deists were no longer read is probably true, but by no means the last word about the state of the deistic interest. The student of the later eighteenth century is always turning up evidence to suggest that, once a wave, deism was now spreading its little rivulets everywhere. Its assumptions, such as the incredibility of the Bible, were entering the public's stock of received ideas and prejudices. Men so eminent as Chatham, Shelburne, and Charles James Fox were deists; and the writings of less celebrated mortals, like Caleb Evans of Bristol, Morgan Jones of Hammersmith, and William Richards of Lynn, give evidence to indicate deism's virtual omnipresence

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<sup>1</sup> History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 3rd. edn., 2 vols. (New York and Burlingame, 1962), vol. i, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> Observations on the Visions of Daniel (Oxford), pp. xii-xiii. The context makes it clear that Girdlestone did not mean that all Newton's successors necessarily disagreed with the prelate!

<sup>3</sup> Reflections on the French Revolution and Other Essays, Everyman's Library (London, 1910), p. 86.

in the reign of George III.<sup>1</sup> Tom Paine must have had a pitch already prepared for him.

It should further be noted that there exists, as the work of an anonymous writer (who was giving "the whole Receipt of the Sale of this Publication" to the S.P.C.K.,<sup>2</sup> and happens to have been a universalist), a pamphlet of as late as 1788 which aimed to defend "the character of the author of the Book of Revelation".<sup>3</sup> In this work, An Address to the Deists, the author writes of "being frequently hurt in conversation by the indifference with which the book of Revelation has been treated even by sincere Christians. Many of the worthy part of the clergy themselves seem to shrink from the subject."<sup>4</sup> He knows that deists claim that the Apocalypse is "the offspring of enthusiasm or imposture".<sup>5</sup> In his defence of the Protestant paradigm, he acknowledges that he borrows freely from Bishop Newton, and he also cites the book on prophecy by "Bishop Halifax" (properly Hallifax).<sup>6</sup> Samuel Hallifax (1733-90), bishop of Gloucester and later of St. Asaph, here leads us to William Warburton and the Warburton trust.

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<sup>1</sup> For a short review of such evidence see John Arthur Oddy, 'The Reverend William Richards (1749-1818) and his Friends: a study of Ideas and Relationships' (unpublished M.Phil. dissertation, University of Nottingham, 1973), pp. 69-70.

<sup>2</sup> An Address to the Deists: or an Inquiry into the Character of the Author of the Book of Revelation, with an Appendix, in which the Argument of Mr Hume against the Credibility of Miracles is considered and refuted (London, 1788), title-page. A copy of this work is in Dr. Williams's Library.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Preface, p.iii.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 1n. Hallifax, a Cambridge don, was consecrated bishop of Gloucester in 1781 and translated to St. Asaph in 1789. The anonymous writer does not give the title of Hallifax's book; it was Twelve Sermons, on the Prophecies concerning the Christian Church; and in particular concerning the Church of Papal Rome (London, 1776). On Hallifax see William Prideaux Courtney in DNB.

The point is that Warburton, besides personally preaching in support of the paradigm, sought to institutionalize such apologetics by founding a trust; the first two lecturers under it were Richard Hurd and Samuel Hallifax, and both their courses were published, Hallifax's in 1776.

Warburton's sermon, The Rise of Antichrist,<sup>1</sup> sees, like Bishop Newton's Dissertations, the argument from prophecy as succeeding the testimony of the miracles in the legitimation of Christianity. Warburton acknowledged that the identification of Rome with Antichrist had fallen into notable disrepute among Protestants. He can speak of a "general" "Desertion"<sup>2</sup> of it, and can say that Sir Isaac Newton "was no sooner known to have commented on the REVELATIONS, than he was judged [a footnote adds "By Voltaire and the French Philosophers; a sect sprung from our Freethinkers"] to have fallen into dotage".<sup>3</sup> Why should this be so? Warburton's historical analysis puts a great deal of blame on the Puritan problem. Puritanism, obstinately and unnecessarily viewing every rite that, before the Reformation, had been superstitiously used, with the invincible repugnance with which the Mosaic legislation regarded any relic of heathenism, came to make the great Protestant identification seem to the Establishment no longer a "common Principle"<sup>4</sup> of the Reformed, but Puritanism's idée fixe: "the support of separation, and the badge of separatists".<sup>5</sup> Again, "to countenance the doctrine of Antichrist, was", in James I's opinion, "to give credit to the Puritan, whom he hated, and to make the Papists desperate, whom he feared. The Court-Divines, therefore, sought his favour, by speaking lightly of the doctrine; or by treating it with contempt. And", continues Warburton, with a reference to Mede, "the greatest Divine and

<sup>1</sup> Discourse XI, in Works of the Right Reverend William Warburton, Lord Bishop of Gloucester /ed. Richard Hurd/, 7 vols. (London, 1788-94), vol. v. (1788), pp. 439-69.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 449.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 453 & n.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 451, 449.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 450.



Scholar of that age ruined his fortune at Court by an immortal work in defence of this common Principle."<sup>1</sup> Persecution of the Puritans made them so enthusiastic for prophecy that "the Court, and Comic, Poets, who are generally the Pensioners or Creatures of the Great, soon took up the subject; and ... turned these Prophecies and their Interpreters, into mockery and ridicule. From thence, the People caught the infection; and Antichrist and Fanaticism have been ever since synonymous terms."<sup>2</sup> Laud's encouragement of Arminianism also had an unfortunate result: it gave prominence to Grotius and Episcopius, who were both very unsound on prophecy. Civil war drove the paradigm into still further disrepute, a tendency again reinforced by "the licentious practices and the Popish projects of the Favorites and Ministers of CHARLES THE SECOND".<sup>3</sup> "The distemper was grown inveterate, and ANTICHRIST and BABYLON were still held to be the language of cant and enthusiasm. So that no eminence of genius, no depth of Science, could secure the Writers on this Prophecy [*i.e.* the Apocalypse] from contempt."<sup>4</sup> It is at this point that Warburton cites the obloquy which the philosophes had hurled even against Sir Isaac Newton.

Warburton's trust was set up in 1768. He appointed three eminent men, including Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, to hold stock worth £500 to provide lectures, in the form of sermons, to be given by the Preacher of Lincoln's Inn "or some other able Divine of the Church of England".<sup>5</sup> The stated aim of the lectures was "to prove

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 450-1, 451n.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 451-2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 452.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 453.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Hurd, An Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies concerning the Christian Church; and, in particular, concerning Papal Rome (London, 1772), p. ix, quoting the trust deed founding the Lectures.

the truth of revealed Religion, in general, and of the Christian in particular, from the completion of the prophecies in the Old and New Testament, which relate to the Christian church, especially to the apostacy of Papal Rome".<sup>1</sup> All the lectures were to be printed and published.<sup>2</sup> Hurd's were published in 1772 as An Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies concerning the Christian Church; and, in particular, concerning the Church of Papal Rome ... In this elegant work Hurd duly defended the great paradigm against Papists and unsound Protestants. His work has a number of interesting features quite apart from its polished, if rather statuesque, style. One is that Hurd carefully defined what the Protestant identification really meant:

"One might observe that no man, who understood the state of this controversy, ever applied the prophecies concerning Antichrist to the person of the Pope, but in general to the church of Rome, or rather to the Antichristian spirit, by which it is governed; or, if to the Pope, to him only as representing that society, of which he is the head; and so far only, as he acted in the spirit of it .... Many of the Popes are said to have been, and, for any thing I know, may have been, Saints, in their private morals."<sup>3</sup>

To buttress the identification, Hurd produced an impressive-looking list of historical witnesses and argued that Rome bore the marks of Antichrist as given in the prophecies: pride, intolerance, idolatry.

Although Hurd is, in the pejorative sense, something of a rationalist and empiricist himself - adopting a non-catastrophic, "evolutionary" view of Christ's Second Coming, interpreted as a process operating throughout Church history, and agreeing with Dail  and Chillingworth in rejecting the Fathers as authoritative commentators, as well as saying that the Scripture must be "interpreted by our best reason"<sup>4</sup> - he has to combat all manner of rationalistic objections to the traditional understanding of biblical prophecy. From his lectures

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. viii, again quoting the trust deed.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. ix-x. Unfortunately, this provision was not always carried out.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 260-1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 425.

it is easy to compile a formidable list of them:- Why is prophecy often obscurely expressed ? Why was the prophetic ministry appropriated to the Jews only ? Have not what are regarded as fulfilments of prophecy happened by mere chance ? Is not the prophetic style fanatical and unintelligible ? Is not the Apocalypse devoid of authority ? Like Warburton, Hurd investigates why there has been this falling-away from the paradigm. In Sermon VIII he distinguishes five reasons:-

(1) the suspicion that the identification was an illusion, or even a contrivance, of the Reformers; (2) the view that it had now become a mere slogan, to keep up Protestant spirits; (3) the disagreement about the identification, especially in Grotius' case; (4) the way in which the non-fulfilment of forecasts based on biblical prophecy had cast doubt on the latter's usefulness; (5) "that levity of mind which disposes too many to take their notions on this, and other subjects of moment, from certain polite and popular, it may be, but frivolous and libertin writers: men, who have no religion, or not enough to venerate the prophetic scriptures; who have no knowledge, or certainly not enough to understand them".<sup>1</sup> Hurd considered that (5) was "the main and master prejudice".<sup>2</sup>

While admitting that numbers of people rejected belief in the prophecies, Hurd was convinced that there was (as we should now say) a "silent majority" of the faithful. Certainly, there was a sufficient residuum of support left to make possible an impressive resumption of prophetic interest and speculation when the French Revolution erupted in 1789 - and this in academic circles too.

E. Roman Catholic expositions: Challoner, Walmesley

Jesuit scholarship, seeking to preserve Rome's legitimacy and reconvert Protestants, set out two proposed readings of the prophecies. These were preterism and futurism.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 280-1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 280.

According to the preterism of the Spaniard Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613), whose commentary on the Apocalypse was published the year after his death, the major portion of the Book (Rev. 1-19) described the past. The seals and trumpets had foretold the early expansion of Christianity, the judgements on the unbelieving Jews, the overthrow of Roman paganism. The thousand years were mystical, signifying the lapse of time until the advent of Antichrist, portrayed in Revelation as the loosing of Satan from his prison. Alcazar's converts included Bossuet, but preterism became only a minority Roman view. More influential was futurism, pioneered by Ribera, again a Spaniard, and popularized by Bellarmine. Ribera assigned the operation of the first five seals to the past: they signified the spread of the Gospel during the apostolic age, the heresies, the persecutions, the conversion of Rome. The sixth seal (Rev. 6 : 12) was deemed equivalent to the signs of the End given in Jesus' apocalyptic discourse (Mark 13). All the rest of the Book of Revelation was understood to apply to the time when Antichrist, a literal individual, would arise. From the Crucifixion to Antichrist would be a thousand mystical years, towards the end of which Rome would apostatize from the Pope. Ten kings would burn the city for this and for sins committed during this apostasy (Rev. 18). Antichrist's rule would end after a literal  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years.<sup>1</sup>

An important point about both Jesuit schemes is that they removed Antichrist from the present, and thus the Roman Church from the jaws of the paradigm, and located him in the future. This futurism is found in Richard Challoner's notes to the prophetic passages in the Douai-Reims Bible. According to his New Testament annotations of 1749 - nearly contemporary with Bishop Newton on the prophecies - the Man of Sin will be a particular individual, the same as "the great Anti-

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<sup>1</sup> This paragraph is based on LeRoy Edwin Froom, The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1946-54), vol. ii (1948), pp. 506-10, 489-502.

christ, who will come before the end of the world".<sup>1</sup> The first beast of Rev. 13 : 1 is a corporate figure, but again with a future reference:

"This first beast, with seven heads and ten horns, is probably the whole company of infidels, enemies and persecutors /sic/ of the people of God, from the beginning, to the end of the world. The seven heads are seven kings, that is, seven principal kingdoms or empires; which have exercised, or shall exercise tyrannical power over the people of God: of these five were then fallen, viz. the Egyptian, Assyrian, Chaldean, Persian and Grecian monarchies: one was present, viz. the empire of Rome; and the seventh and chiefest was to come, viz. the great Antichrist and his empire. The ten horns may be understood of ten lesser persecutors."<sup>2</sup>

Elsewhere there are hints of preterism and of doubt. "Babylon" in Rev. 17 : 5 may be "the city of the devil in general [judging by the comment at 14 : 8, this means "the universal society of the wicked"]; or, if this place be to be understood of any particular city, pagan Rome".<sup>4</sup> The "ten kings" of 17 : 12 (interpreted as "lesser kingdoms") belong to the future, but "some understand this [term] of the Goths, Wandals, Hunns, and other barbarous nations, that destroyed the empire of Rome."<sup>5</sup>

No one need blame Bishop Challoner for his hesitance, which may be called honest and scholarly. Nevertheless, it may have helped to goad on his apparently more assured and emphatic fellow-Roman exegete Bishop Charles Walmesley, who in 1771, writing under the pseudonym "Signor Pastorini", brought out his General History of the Christian Church, from her Birth to her final triumphant State in Heaven, chiefly deduced from the Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle.<sup>6</sup> Walmesley was a Benedictine, educated at the English Benedictine College

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<sup>1</sup> The New Testament ... With annotations, 2 vols. (sine loco, 1749), vol. ii, p. 390n. (On 2 Thess. 2 : 3.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 472n.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 474n.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 478n.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 479n.

<sup>6</sup> Sine loco.

at Douai and the English monastery of St. Edmund in Paris. He had been made a bishop in 1756, and on the death of Bishop York, whose coadjutor he had been, he became Vicar-apostolic of the western district of England.<sup>1</sup> He wrote his General History as one dissatisfied with the preterism of Bossuet and Calmet; both, he said, had "too much contracted this admirable Prophecy [the Book of Revelation], by confining it's contents to so short a period as the four first centuries of the Christian aera, and applying the whole, except the two last chapters, to the persecutions the Church suffered from the pagan Roman Emperors, and to the destruction of the Roman Empire".<sup>2</sup> What Walmesley offered instead was a scheme to cover the whole of history, from the apostolic age onwards - a Catholic historicist interpretation, one might call it. It seems natural to view Walmesley's scheme as (among other things) an outcome of paradigmatical influence. His basic plan was derived from Catholic scholarship of the seventeenth century:

"For the unfolding of the different parts of the Apocalypse, we have followed, in general, the plan laid down by Mr. De la Chetardie towards the close of the last century, as it has been since improved by a late French Commentator on the Scripture. It consists in a division of the whole Christian aera to the end of time into seven ages, corresponding to the seven Seals, seven Trumpets, and seven Vials mentioned in the Apocalypse; so that to each belong a Seal, Trumpet, and Vial."<sup>3</sup>

The first of these seven ages is that of the spread of Christianity in the Roman empire. The rider on the white horse represents Christ as spiritual conqueror; the first trumpet denotes the appalling persecutions under the emperors and their surrogates; and the operation of the first vial punishes the cruel and idolatrous

<sup>1</sup> On Walmesley (1722-97) see Thompson Cooper in DNB.

<sup>2</sup> Walmesley, General History, Introduction, p. ii.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. iii-iv. The French theologian Joachim Trotti de la Chétardie lived from 1636 until 1714. See Albert W. Hyamson, A Dictionary of Universal Biography, 2nd. edn. (London, 1951).

empire, the worst persecutors dying horribly and the empire suffering from earthquakes and the incursions of barbarians. Walmesley's explanations of Rev. 20, which he considers at almost this point, are thoroughly anti-millenarian. He affirms that Satan's chaining took place in the seventh century, and attributes the continuance of devilry thereafter to certain Satanic agents, who, "though of inferior power, were permitted to remain on earth to tempt mankind and to exercise their virtue".<sup>1</sup> On Rev. 20 : 4-6 he says that straightway after their deaths the souls of the martyrs went to "reign with Christ for a thousand years or for that period of time which is counted from their departure out of this world to the general judgment, when their bodies will be reunited to them. And", he continues, "this admission of their souls into glory without their bodies, is called the first Resurrection."<sup>2</sup> The parallel condemnation of sinners to hell immediately on their demise is the first death. The second death will be when their bodies are reunited with their souls and they are plunged again into hell, this time for ever. The bishop also produces various other arguments to refute what he describes as the "opinion" "called the Millenarian System".<sup>3</sup> John, he objects, does not mention the bodies of the martyrs as reigning; the fourth Gospel (5 : 28-29) rules out the supposition that there will be more than one general resurrection, that of "the Good and the Wicked together";<sup>4</sup> and Calmet is quoted both as tracing back millenarianism to the Jewish illusion that the Messiah would establish an earthly kingdom to last for a thousand years, and as attributing the chief blame for the propagation of the Christian version of this to Papias:

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<sup>1</sup> Walmesley, General History, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

"He that gave the greatest credit to that opinion, was Papias, a disciple of St. John the Evangelist and companion of St. Polycarp. He pretended to have received the Millenarian doctrine from the Apostles and their disciples. Upon this assertion it was adopted by St. Irenaeus, St. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Victorinus, Lactantius, and several others; while it was on the other hand impugned by others from the first ages of the Church. And certainly what Eusebius remarks of the character of Papias, ought to be sufficient to discredit his authority. He was a man of a very moderate understanding, who for want of comprehending what he heard from the Apostles, took literally [sic] what was said in a mystical sense." <sup>1</sup>

The second age in Church history began about 320, and was notable for the rise, progress, and eventual destruction of Arianism. The third age, beginning about 406, saw the downfall of the empire; and Walmesley cites the mixture of iron and clay in the Danielic colossus as pointing to the later empire's "weakness and want of solidity".<sup>2</sup> The fourth seal "discloses to us the rise of the Mahometan Empire, which opens the fourth age of the Church about the year 622".<sup>3</sup> The fourth trumpet announces "the fatal Heresy and Schism of the Greeks";<sup>4</sup> and the fourth vial refers to the punishment of these deviants by the Muslim conquest of their lands. The fifth age is that of the Reformation, whose Catholic martyrs are among those who cry out from under the altar and are given white robes. According to Walmesley's interpretation of the fifth trumpet, the Protestants bring torments to the Church for two periods of five months. Here (Rev. 9 : 5, 10), Walmesley adopts the year-day principle, and, taking 30 days to each prophetic month, arrives at two distinct intervals of 150 years. The first extends from 1525 to 1675: this was the period of violent persecution of Catholics. The second, running from 1675 to 1825, is of milder suffering. The nearness of the year 1825, and the outpouring

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 83. (Papias' critic Eusebius was anti-millenarian.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 167.



of the fifth vial, moves Walmesley to acute pastoral concern:

"When one reflects that, of the three hundred years allowed to the reign of the Locusts, there remain only fifty or fifty five to run, one cannot but wish with an earnest heart, that the people represented by those Insects would enter into a serious consideration of that circumstance. What a happiness ! if, during this short remaining interval, some part of them at least would submit to see their errors, and the great mischief that has been done to the Church by their revolt against it." <sup>1</sup>

Walmesley apprehends that the forthcoming vial will be poured out "upon the Kings and Governors of the Protestant States". <sup>2</sup>

Now for the rest of the future, which occupies a large slice of Walmesley's book. The "Prodigies" and "disasters" at the opening of the sixth seal will be "the forerunners of the approaching general dissolution of the world". <sup>3</sup> Signs of the End given in Jesus's apocalyptic discourse will operate. The Man of Sin will also appear, who is the little horn of Dan. 7; he will spring from the Muslim family ruling "Crim Tartary" <sup>4</sup> (the Crimea). Having succeeded to the Ottoman empire, he will conquer many lands and revive the Roman empire. His promises to restore the Jewish State and cult will induce the Jews to gather at Jerusalem, where (in the event) Elijah (one of the two witnesses - the other is Enoch) will convert them to Christianity. The Gospel will be preached to many nations. A widespread failure to repent will open the sixth vial: Satanic armies, and (it seems) Satan himself, will be loosed to punish the world. Antichrist's depredations will include the stopping of the Eucharistic Sacrifice for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years. But Christ, riding a white horse, will defeat him. Constantinople, the "Babylon" of Rev. 14 : 8, will be destroyed. (Rome is earlier destroyed: Rev. 18 : 2.) Gog and his people Magog, whom Satan will thrust into the combat, will be exterminated, and Satan himself be cast into the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 265.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 292. In 1783 the Crimea was acquired by Russia.

fiery lake. "The Halcyon days of the Christian people"<sup>1</sup> will now be experienced, but most of mankind will forget God; and then, at the seventh stage of Church history, worldly time will run out. There will be the general resurrection and judgement. Walmsley, not only a pastor but a mathematician, is appalled at the stupendous scale of the damnation, calculating that the blood-bath in Rev. 14 : 20 (which Bishop Newton and Gill both thought hyperbolical, and upon which Challoner's notes are silent) requires "upwards of 60,000,000,000,000"<sup>2</sup> bodies to supply it. Still, the new heaven and earth will appear, by transformation of the old; and there will be two new Jerusalems, that of Rev. 21 : 2 for the pre-Christian saints, and that of 21 : 10 for the Christian ones.

Obviously, Walmsley's exegesis of prophecy differs very much from that of Newton, Gill, and the other academic exponents of the Protestant paradigm; nevertheless, his basic theological assumptions are exactly the same. All these exegetes understood the inspiration of Scripture as producing verbal infallibility throughout; all implicitly believed that if only the task of interpretation were correctly pursued, the Bible would yield a coherent, harmonious theology and a reliable scheme by which subsequent history could be analysed and, to a modest extent, forecast. All profoundly misunderstood the nature of biblical prophecy, which they assumed was meant to

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 452.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 475. The learned Church of Ireland exegete William Hales was to dispute Walmsley's calculation. See Hales's New Analysis of Chronology, 3 vols. in 4, vol. ii being split into 2 separate books (London, 1809-12), vol. ii, book 2 (1811), p. 1350n.

apply, in some important instances, to times far ahead of those of the prophets in question.

# APPENDIX

## THE WarBURTONIAN LECTURERS, 1768-1840.

The Warburtonian Lectures in this period would constitute a research topic in themselves. Here I simply provide an initial chronological list. I believe it is needed. James Darling's schedule in his invaluable Cyclopaedia Bibliographica, 2 vols. (London 1854-9), vol. i (1854), pages 3101-3, mentions all the lecturers enumerated below, but does not indicate the places in the list occupied by the four non-publishing lecturers, Layard, Nicholson, Raynard, and Rennell. A document communicated to me by the Librarian to Lincoln's Inn solves this difficulty, though it does not give the periods in which these four lectured.

The Trust deed limits each lecturer to four years. Where known, the dates of this span are placed immediately after the lecturer's name in the ensuing list, and are followed by the main title of his published course.

1. HURD, Richard; 1768-72; An Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies concerning the Christian Church, and in particular concerning the Church of Papal Rome (London, 1772).
2. HALLIFAX, Samuel; 1772-6; Twelve Sermons on the Prophecies concerning the Christian Church, and in particular concerning the Church of Papal Rome (London, 1776).
3. BAGOT, Lewis; 1776-80; Twelve Discourses on the Prophecies, concerning the First Establishment and subsequent History of Christianity (Oxford, 1780).
4. APTHORPE, East; 1780-4; Discourses on Prophecy, 2 vols. (London, 1786).
5. NICHOLSON.           Lectures unpublished.
6. LAYARD.             Lectures unpublished.
7. RAYNARD.           Lectures unpublished.

8. NARES, Robert;<sup>1</sup> 1800-4; A Connected and Chronological View of the Prophecies relating to the Christian Church (London, 1805).
9. PEARSON, Edward; 1807-11; Twelve Lectures on the Subject of the Prophecies relating to the Christian Church (Broxbourne, 1811).
10. ALLWOOD, Philip; 1811-15; Twelve Lectures on the Prophecies relating to the Christian Church, and especially to the Apostacy of Papal Rome, 2 vols. (London, 1815).
11. RENNELL, Thomas. Lectures unpublished.
12. DAVISON, John; 1819-23; Discourses on Prophecy in which are considered its Structure, Use, and Inspiration (London, 1824).
13. LYALL, William Rowe; Propaedia prophetica: a View of the Use and Design of the Old Testament (London, 1840).
14. NOLAN, Frederick; 1833-6; The Chronological Prophecies; as constituting a Connected System (London, 1837).
15. M ' CAUL, Alexander; 1837-40; Lectures on the Prophecies proving the Divine Origin of Christianity (London, 1846).

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<sup>1</sup> Incorrectly, Darling calls him Samuel Nares (Cycl. Bibl., vol. i, p. 3103).

### CHAPTER III

#### THE PARADIGM IN AN AGE OF REVOLUTION

##### A. The earthquake in the city

"And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven."  
(Rev. 11 : 13.)

"Great Earthquakes', in the language of prophecy, says Sir I. Newton, are put 'for the Shaking of Kingdoms, so as to distract or overthrow them'."<sup>1</sup> So remarked Joseph Lomas Towers, the Librarian to Dr. Williams's Trust, when in 1796 he presented evidence suggesting that the French Revolution had been predicted in eschatological prophecy. The studies of some exegetes, he observed, had led to forecasts, published years before 1789, of some kind of cataclysm involving France. Thus, for example, Whiston in 1706 had taken the city of Rev. 11 : 13 to be the Roman Empire, which had fragmented into ten successor States; of these, Whiston urged, France had arisen last, was therefore chronologically the tenth, and would fall in the convulsion.<sup>2</sup> Again, Bishop Newton had suggested in his Dissertations on the Prophecies that France might undergo a "reformation", with its kings helping to destroy Romanism.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Robert Fleming in 1701 had predicted the humiliation of the French monarchy by 1794.<sup>4</sup> Further, Thomas Goodwin, expounding the Apocalypse as far back as 1639, "thinks it probable", says

<sup>1</sup> [Joseph Lomas Towers], Illustrations of Prophecy, 2 vols. (London, 1796), vol. i, pp. 87-8, quoting Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John (London, 1733), p.17. (To avoid numerous repetitions Towers early presented a list of the authors and titles he would cite only in short form thereafter: see thus his vol. i, pp. xxxvi-xxxviii.)

<sup>2</sup> Towers, Illustrations, vol. i, p. 91, referring to William Whiston, An Essay on the Revelation of Saint John, so far as concerns the past and present Times (London), pp. 90, 227, 235.

<sup>3</sup> Towers, Illustrations, vol. i, p. 96, quoting vol. iii (1758), p. 292 (Diss. XXV.)

<sup>4</sup> Towers, Illustrations, vol. i, p.3. Towers was drawing upon Robert Fleming, jnr., 'An Epistolary Discourse ... concerning the Rise and Fall of Rome Papal', Discourses on Several Subjects (London), pp. lxxv, lxxviii, lxxiv. These prognostications of Fleming's were reprinted in 1793, during the succeeding century, and (astonishingly) as late as 1931: see the British Library Catalogue.

Towers, that FRANCE may be this country affected by the earthquake; and that in this Revolution men will be deprived 'of their NAMES and TITLES'."<sup>1</sup> The point of this latter reference is that since the Greek at Rev. 11 : 13 reads not simply "men", but "names or titles of men",<sup>2</sup> the verse might conceivably refer to the revolutionaries' abolition of dignified titles.

Still further, as George Stanley Faber (1773-1854) was to contend, the Revolution was obviously the biggest upheaval since the Reformation, and, as such, it only could be the subject of the Johannine vision of the earthquake.<sup>3</sup>

It was, then, by arguments like these, that the great Revolution was declared to have been prophesied in Scripture.

As time went on, the exegetes felt more and more that they were living in apocalyptic days. Not only had the insurgent French essentially superseded their ruler; not only did they proceed to put him and his consort to death; not only did they lay hands on ecclesiastical property and virtually nationalize the clergy; not only did they (at least for a space) adopt the formal worship of Reason; but their armies, sweeping over their borders, invaded Italy, where a Roman Republic was set up as a client state of France and the aged Pope Pius VI was captured, dragged from place to place in Italy, and finally brought over the Alps to Valence, where (in 1799) he died. About the same time a French army

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<sup>1</sup> Towers, Illustrations, vol. i, p. 92, quoting 'An Exposition of the Revelation', The Works of Thomas Goodwin, 5 vols. (London, 1681-1704), vol. ii (1683), p. 174. (This 'Exposition' is separately paginated.)

<sup>2</sup> Towers, Illustrations, vol. i, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> A Dissertation on the Prophecies, that have been fulfilled, are now fulfilling, or will hereafter be fulfilled, relative to the Great Period of 1260 Years, 4th edn., 2 vols. (London, 1810), vol. ii, pp. 118-9.

invaded the Ottoman domains of Egypt and Palestine. Could not one expect some immense fulfilment, before long, of eschatological prophecy? Perhaps even now the Papacy was being extinguished. Perhaps the restoration of Israel was at hand. Perhaps even the inauguration of the millennium was not so far off. But there were differences among the exegetes.

An obvious first step in analysing these differences is to categorize the published interpretations in terms of left and right. A left-wing exegete was likely to be aghast at Britain's war with France. Such warfare fell little short (if at all) of impiety, he reasoned, because France was the divinely-appointed agent in destroying the Papal empire, just as Cyrus of Persia had been acting for God when he overthrew the empire of the Babylonians and thereby brought about the Return from Exile. In contrast, on the right wing the spirit of revolutionary France was apt to be regarded as Antichristian, and the venerable Median paradigm adjusted to show this.

We begin with the left.

#### B. Joseph Lomas Towers

Towers, an alumnus of St. Paul's School and New College, Hackney, was born about 1767, the son of an unorthodox Presbyterian minister who was coadjutor to Richard Price; Towers himself was a Unitarian minister. From 1792 until 1804 he was Dr. Williams's Librarian.<sup>1</sup> In 1796 he published a lengthy book called Illustrations of Prophecy. The circumstances were peculiarly anonymous. Neither the author's nor the publisher's name is given; and the author tells us that the printing took place "more than a hundred miles from the place where I reside",<sup>2</sup> which seems curious. Presumably all this evasiveness sprang from the author's nervous reaction to the suspension of Habeas Corpus, the passage of the Treasonable Practices Act, and the judicial

<sup>1</sup> On Joseph Lomas Towers see Alexander Gordon in DNB (art. 'Joseph Towers').

<sup>2</sup> Towers, Illustrations, vol. i, Preface, p. xxxi.iiin.



sentences imposed on several radicals, let alone what William Richards described in 1794 as "the violent vociferations of loyal frenzy, or the savage acclamations of a church and king mob".<sup>1</sup> But although Towers's book was that of a republican who declared that his interest in prophecy had been awakened by government-inspired, anti-French misrepresentations of Fleming's old work, and who thought that the apocalyptic beast represented secular tyranny as well as ecclesiastical, and hinted that the English monarchy was one of the ten horns to be destroyed, he need not, perhaps, have bothered to hide his identity. It is said that Pitt scorned to prosecute Godwin's Political Justice because no workman could afford to buy it;<sup>2</sup> Illustrations of Prophecy would seem doubly protected, by price and by stultifying longwindedness.

As may be imagined, Towers's book presents a politically-loaded, "rational Dissenter's" version of the received paradigm. Nevertheless, his crash-course in the interpretation of prophecy has left him well-read, so that his volumes give a good idea of the eighteenth-century prophetic library.

Like Whiston and Sir Isaac Newton, he modifies the Median paradigm by placing all the vials under the seventh trumpet. These vials, he suggests, will follow the earthquake of Rev. 11 : 13. Of the fifth vial he says darkly, "Divine providence will cause events to happen, eminently injurious to the power and authority of the antichristian monarchies of Europe."<sup>3</sup> And his idea of antichristianism is lavishly comprehensive. Christianity, he claims, was fundamentally corrupted in the fourth century; and Matt. 24 : 29 foretells "the complete destruction of all the established systems of oppression, which kings and notables may any where uphold".<sup>4</sup> This prophecy will be fulfilled when the punishment of Jewry shall end. 1789 has a crucial chronological

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<sup>1</sup> Reflections on French Atheism and on English Christianity (Lynn, 1794), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> H.N. Brailsford, Shelley, Godwin and their Circle, 2nd. edn. (London, 1951), p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Towers, Illustrations of Prophecy, vol. 1, p. 179.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., vol. II, p. 391.

significance: Towers agrees with Bicheno (see next section) that it marked the end of the 1260 years, which began with the publication of Justinian's Code in 529. Meanwhile, the Church of Rome is dying, and the French Republicans may soon "strike a formidable blow at the papal power in the metropolis where its throne is erected".<sup>1</sup> John's description of the millennium to be is symbolic, like most of his book; and Towers's understanding of the reality behind the symbols is almost Utilitarian :

"By the MILLENNIUM I mean a period of great length, eminently distinguished for the spread of KNOWLEDGE and of genuine CHRISTIANITY, in consequence of which good GOVERNMENT will universally be established, VIRTUE will not only be generally esteemed but practised, and human HAPPINESS will be carried to an unexampled height."<sup>2</sup>

C. James Bicheno

Nobody would call the earnest, didactic, repetitious Bicheno (1752-1831) a consistently good stylist, but his honesty and courage shine through his Signs of the Times<sup>3</sup>, and he can point out an embarrassing situation. Thus, in his Address to the Reader of the third edition (dated 31 December 1798), he says,

"It is to be lamented that, though, in times past, there were so many, both in the established church and out of it, to sound the alarm, and warn the people against the delusions and crimes of Antichrist; though hundreds of volumes have been written, and thousands of sermons preached, concerning the enormities of Babylon the great; about the predicted fall of Rome, and of the tyrannical Roman church; and though, from the Reformation to the present times, prayers have constantly been offered in all our churches for the downfall of the papal power; yet, now the time is come, and the nations begin to hate the whore, and make her desolate; now, when the papal government is overturned, proud Rome revolutionized ... not a word is to be heard, that may lead us to suspect that these things at all indicate the accomplishment of those predictions, about which so much has been written and said. ... Kingdom after kingdom falls; and the papal government itself is annihilated; and scarcely any

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol. i, p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. ii, p. 635.

<sup>3</sup> 3rd. edn. (London, 1799). Bicheno was a Dissenting minister and schoolmaster. See Francis Watt in DNB on James Ebenezer Bicheno.

sensation is produced, unless of regret, and of indignation against the instruments whom God sees fit to employ. It is next to treason to talk of Antichrist, and to ascribe those calamities which now desolate the earth to the retributive justice of God." <sup>1</sup>

What, Bicheno asks in particular, in a later section of his book, has happened to Richard Hurd ?

"Has this venerable bishop lost all his powers, or what is the reason that he does not now come forward and lend, to the church of God, and his country, the aid of his superior learning and abilities, either to demonstrate the fulfilment of the sacred prophecies by the present wonderful events, and thus guard his countrymen against measures which might involve us in destruction; or to dissipate those illusions to which we may be exposed ?" <sup>2</sup>

Worse than such silences, there is even abroad at this time a deplorable tendency, animadversions on which conclude Bicheno's treatise, to seek a rapprochement with Rome.

France, of course, has a key role in Bicheno's interpretation of the prophecies. The dragon, he claims, is the pagan Roman tyranny, together with the Holy Roman emperors, and the beast from the sea is "the Roman ecclesiastical tyranny".<sup>3</sup> As for the second Johannine beast, is it not "Lewis XIV. or at least that tyranny which the family of the Capets have exercised, to the great oppression of the Christian church, and to the destruction of mankind ?"<sup>4</sup> The two witnesses are collective witnesses for "gospel truth" and for "civil liberty",<sup>5</sup> and this succession includes not only the Hampdens, the Sidneys, and the Lockes, but even the Hoadlys; yet France has had the greatest number of witnesses for Gospel truth, and the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days of their prophesying have extended from the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) to the year

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<sup>1</sup> Bicheno, Signs of the Times, 3rd. edn., p. iv.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 216n. - 17n.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

1789. The Revolution marks their "resurrection", and it also closes the 1260 year-period, which began in 529. Therefore the seventh trumpet must soon have sounded, and the outpouring of the vials begun. "The probability is", writes Bicheno, "that the seventh trumpet sounded in the autumn of ninety-two, when the Duke of Brunswick invaded France. And if so, it follows that the first angel then began to pour out his vial of wrath upon the earth, as a libation to divine justice."<sup>1</sup> The second vial began to be poured out, on islands and maritime lands, in 1793, "when the maritime countries joined the Antichristian tyrants in their crusade against the liberties of France".<sup>2</sup> The third vial may have been tipped when Bonaparte invaded Italy. The fourth is to be thought of as being poured out on despotism. Again, the fact that "the Pope and his college of cardinals are become wandering mendicants"<sup>3</sup> may imply the process of emptying the fifth. Under the sixth the Ottoman Empire will be shaken. Indeed, in an appendix of 1799 Bicheno hesitantly suggests that the French campaign in Egypt may be the start of this sixth outpouring. He adds, "Whether the present extraordinary expedition of the French in the east, is immediately connected with the future restoration of the Jews, God only knows; but it is highly probable that it is."<sup>4</sup>

Bicheno took up this theme of Jewish restoration in his pamphlet of 1800 called The Restoration of the Jews, the Crisis of all Nations.<sup>5</sup> He still suspected that the momentous event, which would "be

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 184n.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>5</sup> London.

effected at a time of great and general calamities and revolutions", and at the fall of "the Turkish empire in particular",<sup>1</sup> might "not be very far off".<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, why should "the Christian nations" bolster up the Turks?<sup>3</sup> God is employing the French, whatever horrible crimes have been committed in their country, to punish the Antichristian and Muslim oppressors. Surely Isaiah 6 : 10 ("Make the heart of this people fat ...") gives us a key to the British state of perception?

#### D. David Simpson

Like Bicheno's Signs of the Times, David Simpson's A Plea for Religion and the Sacred Writings (1797) was often reprinted. Their basic messages are similar. The war, claims Simpson "was ... ordained of GOD for the subversion of the seat of the Beast".<sup>4</sup> "The French are only the tools and instruments in the hands of GOD'S indignation. They have yet a deal of direful work to do. When that is accomplished, they shall be laid aside; and, I hope, chastised and turned unto the GOD of their fathers."<sup>5</sup> The only hope for England, which is one of the fated ten kingdoms, is to repent and reform.

Simpson (1745-99) adds that there are still some encouraging signs of continuing divine favour: God "hath given us a patriotic King, able Ministers, skilful Generals, brave Soldiers, unparalleled Admirals, and gallant Sailors; above all, he hath poured out a spirit of wrestling prayer upon large numbers of religious people".<sup>6</sup> A note of evangelical

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<sup>1</sup> The Restoration of the Jews ..., p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 55n.

<sup>4</sup> A Plea for Religion and the Sacred Writings: addressed to the Disciples of Thomas Paine, and wavering Christians of every Persuasion, 7th. edn. (Liverpool, 1812), p. 423. The title-page describes this edn. as "carefully collated with the last edition printed before the author's death; with a memoir of ... Simpson, and several additional notes, by the Rev. John Gaulter".

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 403n.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 423.

patriotism thus succeeds in forcing its way out, through the disturbed tones of Simpson's book, which is a work showing Angst. He is an Establishment incumbent sliding towards Dissent of a Scripture-sufficiency kind; indeed, only death prevented his secession.<sup>1</sup> A Plea reeks of disillusionment, disquiet, disgust. Though he adheres to the Protestant paradigm and refers to Bishop Newton's "three admirable volumes on the Prophecies",<sup>2</sup> he nevertheless observes (and here we are reminded of Towers), "Few of our most able writers on the Prophecies, however, seem to me to have any idea, that they apply to the Protestant establishments, as well as to the Catholic kingdoms."<sup>3</sup> He directs readers to David Hartley "for a more particular account of the fall of the Establishments in Christendom. Our ecclesiastical governors would do well to weigh seriously what that learned Physician hath said upon this subject, while yet there is time. See Part 2. Prop. 82."<sup>4</sup> - But what can we expect", laments Simpson, "from men, who are surrounded with worldly honours, entitled to a vast patronage of livings, and tempted with near 100,000 pounds a year, to let things continue as they are?"<sup>5</sup> Crying out for

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12 (in the "Memoirs" of Simpson). There is an article on Simpson by Charles William Sutton in DNB.

<sup>2</sup> Simpson, A Plea, p. 429n.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 191n.

<sup>4</sup> Prop. LXXXI had envisaged the overturning of "all the present Civil Governments" (Observations on Man, 2 vols., London, 1749, vol. ii, p. 366): prophecy had declared it. Prop. LXXXII argued that the relationship of the civil and the ecclesiastical powers was so close that "if the first fall, the last must fall also" (ibid., p. 370); and in any case the fall of the latter is prophesied. All churches are under the prophetic doom, since all have left "the true, pure, simple Religion; and teach for Doctrines the Commandments of Men" (ibid.), all are worldly, all are persecuting, all neglectful of mission, even disregarding the dominical command to go to "the lost Sheep of the House of Israel" (ibid.). One feels that this last quotation would startle the philosopher's readers. The very next proposition declares, "It is probable, that the Jews will be restored to Palestine" (ibid., p. 373). Seven reasons are adduced in support. Is it not suggestive that Lewis Way, so remarkable a philosemite, admitted that Hartley had influenced his theology? See Way's The Latter Rain; with Observations on the Importance of General Prayer for Special Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (London, 1821), p. xix.

<sup>5</sup> Simpson, A Plea, p. 199n.

reform are the civil part of the Constitution, the severe criminal laws, Chancery delays, the notion of Church establishment, swearing the Thirty-nine Articles lightly, patronage, sinecures, non-residence, imposed subscription to "human creeds and explications of doctrines",<sup>1</sup> the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed, the Test Act, tithes, slavery, the slave-trade, and moral wickedness in general. Simpson can make his reader shudder. He is a great man for deathbed scenes that have been positively or negatively instructive; he describes hideous atrocities committed in the French Revolution; and his denunciation of personal evil to be found in England includes (for instance) a brief but chilling account<sup>2</sup> of a certain man of social rank who, he says, was a moral menace to the young of both sexes for miles around.

#### E. Tory Churchmen

Towers, Bicheno, and Simpson thus insisted that the vast European convulsions had a purpose, namely the divinely-ordained destruction of Antichrist, still thought of as part-Papal and part-Turkish, though apt also, in their writings, to embody other traits, such as political oppression in general and various civil and ecclesiastical arrangements not to their taste. France, albeit steeped in guilt, was the principal demolition-agent; and so to oppose France was to fight against the designs of God. By a pleasing irony these self-consciously "progressive" writers were now, in fact, the traditionalists, since, in certain circles which we may safely label "Tory",<sup>3</sup> the same convulsions were receiving a highly novel interpretation which imputed some or all of the marks of Antichrist to revolutionary France. This was a significant

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 245n.

<sup>3</sup> The word "Tory", "after 1784, [meant] a supporter of the younger Pitt and his successors, and so, among other things, an opponent of the French revolution and what it stood for". Donald J Greene, The Politics of Samuel Johnson (New Haven, 1960), p.13.

step; thought was being re-orientated: the time would come when this new identification of Antichrist and its reverse side - a new sympathy with the Church of the Popes - would help to effect within the English Church a bouleversement previously unthinkable.

Now, if these traditional exegetes of the prophecies were motivated by the old dread and hatred of Rome, and irritation (to say the least) with the establishment of the Church and its concomitant test-legislation, and their hopes for what they considered freedom, their Tory opponents were moved to horror by the formal and shocking atheism, frightful anarchy, and outward aggression evinced by France since 1789, and felt profound alarm that a similar upheaval might happen in Britain. After all, this realm had itself seen civil war, the beheading of its king, and the proscription of the national Church. Moreover, it was also the birthplace of that celebrated Second Treatise on Civil Government, wherein the monarch was described as being invested with his executive monopoly as a trust, to wield it on behalf of the community, which might in the last resort deprive him of it for misgovernment. Georgian England contemplated this theory with satisfaction until a thoroughgoing use of the forfeiture provision was made, first by the Americans, then by the French. Now the doctrine seemed dangerous. William Jones of Nayland, condemning the bad influence of Locke's principles in politics as well as in religion, uses, perhaps unconsciously - which is not to say insignificantly - an expression faintly reminiscent of St. Peter's reference to Judas Iscariot: "Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus" (Acts 1 : 16). In Jones's sight, Locke's worst offence was "that he was the oracle to those who began and conducted the American Rebellion; which led to the French Revolution; which will lead (if God permit) to the total overthrow



of Religion and Government in this kingdom, perhaps in the whole Christian world".<sup>1</sup>

Anxieties of this kind were not merely speculative. Certainly there was ominous-looking disaffection in Britain: demands for Parliamentary reform, a tendency to correspond with the French revolutionaries, naval mutinies, trouble in Ireland. All such apprehensions were fed at a profound level by Burke's magnificent Reflections. Included in Burke's treatise was a sketch of a literary conspiracy. "Political men of letters" in France were not, he says, so regularly (and tactfully) cultivated and protected by the Court "since the decline of the life and greatness of Louis the Fourteenth".<sup>2</sup> The result, he continues, was that they had drawn together "in a sort of incorporation of their own".<sup>3</sup> He states,

"The literary cabal had some years ago formed something like a regular plan for the destruction of the Christian religion. This object they pursued with a degree of zeal which hitherto had been discovered only in the propagators of some system of piety. They were possessed with a spirit of proselytism in the most fanatical degree; and from thence, by an easy progress, with the spirit of persecution according to their means. What was not to be done towards their great end by any direct or immediate act, might be wrought by a longer progress through the medium of opinion."<sup>4</sup>

Other books, which evidently received much attention, professed to detect wide spread conspiracies aimed at the very fabric of European society. Much quoted and cited in the primary sources for this chapter is the French Jesuit Augustin Barruel (1741-1820). When his order

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<sup>1</sup> A Letter to the Church of England, pointing out some Popular Errors of Bad Consequence (London, 1798). The Theological and Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. William Jones, ed. William Stevens, 2nd. edn., 6 vols. (London, 1810), vol. vi, pp. 233-49. (p. 247).

<sup>2</sup> Reflections on the French Revolution and Other Essays, Everyman's Library (London, 1910), p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 107-8.

was expelled from France in 1764, Barruel had gone to teach in Jesuit colleges in Bohemia and Moravia. In 1774 he returned to France, where he earned a reputation in letters, editing the clerical periodical Le Journal ecclésiastique. During the early years of the Revolution Barruel encouraged loyal priests and attacked the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. When from 1792 until 1803 he was a refugee in England, two of his books appeared in English: The History of the Clergy during the French Revolution (1794)<sup>1</sup> and Memoirs, illustrating the History of Jacobinism (1797),<sup>2</sup> with a second edition of the latter in 1798. Barruel put forward the thesis that there had been a planned attack on Christianity and government by atheists and anarchists, often working through secret societies, such as the Freemasons and the Illuminati. The prime movers were Voltaire, D'Alembert, and Frederick II of Prussia.<sup>3</sup> Working independently of Barruel was a distinguished North Briton, John Robison (1739-1805), professor of Natural Philosophy at Edinburgh, one of whom James Watt testified, "He was a man of the clearest head and the most science of anybody I have ever known."<sup>4</sup> Robison wrote Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the Secret Meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies. This book was published at Edinburgh in 1797; a second

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from the French by the Hon. Robert Clifford (London).

<sup>2</sup> [Translated by the Hon. Robert Clifford]. 4 vols. (London).

<sup>3</sup> An account of Barruel's life and ideas is found in (e.g.) Jacques Godechot, The Counter-Revolution, translated from the French by Salvator Attanasio (London, 1972), pp. 41-8. Godechot tells us that Barruel's conspiracy-theory, the most famous appearance of which is in the Memoirs illustrating the History of Jacobinism, was adumbrated in 1789, and that Barruel, "one of the teachers of the counter-revolutionary doctrine of integral absolutism", inspired the whole policy of the Holy Alliance and of the system practiced by the restored monarchies from 1815 onwards in France, Spain, Italy, and elsewhere" (pp.47-8).

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by George Stronach in his DNB art. on Robison.

edition followed in the same year; and a third came out in Dublin in 1798, when a fourth also appeared at London. This sort of propaganda had an effect. Barruel's English translator, the Hon. R. Clifford, produced his own Application of Barruel's Memoirs of Jacobinism to the Secret Societies of Ireland and Great Britain (1798).<sup>1</sup> The Illuminati get more space in Charles Buck's Theological Dictionary of 1802 than the millennium!<sup>2</sup> And we shall see how certain Tory Churchmen, using such materials as Barruel's, are able, to their own satisfaction, to reconstruct the rise of the atheistic, anarchistic, immoralistic Anti-christ, at last clearly visible after 1789.

#### F. William Jones of Nayland

The influential movement to include French atheism in the paradigm can be traced back at least as far as a sermon preached on 26 January 1794 by William Jones, the High Church perpetual curate of Nayland in Suffolk.<sup>3</sup> The likeable Jones (1726-1800) was a distinguished apologist for the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, a master of quiet, measured prose, and a respectable activist who about two years previously had tried to establish an anti-revolutionary association called the Society for the Reformation of Principles.<sup>4</sup> The Society died, but a journal founded in connexion with it survived and had fame yet to come: it was the British Critic, the future Tractarians' paper. Indeed, Jones is one of the numerous links between the older Tory Churchmanship and

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<sup>1</sup> London.

<sup>2</sup> 2 vols. (London); the articles are in vols. i and ii, respectively.

<sup>3</sup> It was the Sunday before the commemoration of Charles I's martyrdom on 30 January.

<sup>4</sup> In Jones's Proposal for a Reformation of Principles, No. II (i.e. the "Sequel"), it is stated, "Some Gentlemen ... do resolve ... to take such measures, in a literary way only, as shall be thought most conducive to the preservation of our religion, government, and laws." (The piece is dated London, 11 June 1792, and is in Jones's Works vol. vi, pp. 288-90; the quotation is on p. 288.)

what Yngve Brilioth called "Neo-Anglicanism". "Nayland vicarage," wrote J.H. Overton, "became the centre of a little circle which afterwards expanded into the high-church party of the early part of the nineteenth century."<sup>1</sup>

The sermon in question was on words from Luke 12 : 56:

"How is it that ye do not discern this time ?"

"I enter here", says Jones, "upon no diffuse investigation; but mean to confine myself to one remarkable sign of the last days, which I think hath never yet received an adequate interpretation; not through the unskilfulness of interpreters; but, because it seems to be one of those mysterious predictions, which nothing but the event can enable us to understand: and which a succession of future events may still be opening to us father than we can see at present." <sup>2</sup>

The "remarkable sign" to which Jones refers is the description of the Man of Sin. The preacher reasons that since Christ at his presence in judgement is to destroy this Man, the latter must represent "the last form of sin, or power of iniquity, that shall appear in the world".<sup>3</sup> After considering the figure's singular predicates, he goes on to show, in a passage whose force any summary would evaporate, how the times have seen them vividly exemplified.

"Little did we think, twenty years ago, that we should live to see these things fulfilled so nearly as they have been; and in shewing this, I shall have no occasion to invent or to exaggerate: the facts are such as will speak for themselves; and there is scarcely a person here present, who could not say to me what I am about to say to him. We all know, that in the neighbouring country, a direct apostacy hath taken effect. The Christian religion hath been renounced; not negatively, through corruption of manners, or neglect of truth; but positively, publicly, and in solemn form. The restraining power of government, and the obligations of law, have not been interrupted and defied, in the fury of tumultuous agitation, but absolutely taken out of the way and abolished. The will of a wicked nation hath been admitted as the only sovereign law now to be obeyed: and while the Gospel teaches, that there is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy, we see a portentous company risen up,

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<sup>1</sup> On William Jones in DNB.

<sup>2</sup> The Man of Sin, Sermon XV, Works, vol. iv, pp. 219-20.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.223.

who take to themselves the sublime denomination of legislators; not under the authority of God, but in their own right: exclusive of his legislation, and in opposition to his power. And, that nothing may be wanting to the fulfilling of the prophecy, even in the letter, the churches have been shut up from the worship of God, and opened to admit the worship of reason; an idol unknown to the temples of Pagan antiquity. And what is the reason here intended? It is the reason of man; that is, of the philosopher or the plow-man; for the one is as much a man as the other; and where all are equal, as good a man. And what is the reason of man, but the mind of man! And what is the mind of man, but man himself; who now, as God, is actually seated in the temple of God to be worshipped."<sup>1</sup>

Jones confesses that it was in Britain that "reason, now deified in France, was first invested with the right of making its own religion",<sup>2</sup> and that likewise from Britain came the doctrine "that there is no power of government but from the power of the people", a doctrine which had led here to "the murder of a king", "a sacrilegious plundering of the church, and a miserable oppression of the people".<sup>3</sup> But through God's mercy "our mistakes did not terminate in atheism."<sup>4</sup>

The sermon was printed by request, and by 1796 had passed through four editions.

#### G. Henry Kett

Jones's exegetical lead was followed by a number of important writers who included Henry Kett, Bishop Samuel Horsley, and George Stanley Faber.

Kett (1761-1825) first published his book entitled History the Interpreter of Prophecy in 1799; it went through many editions. The author was an Oxford Fellow, and had been Bampton Lecturer in 1790. He also held incumbencies. It is a fact of some significance (given the general conservative and Romantic drift then beginning to be evident in intellectual life) that he wrote the preface and annotations to

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 225-6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 228-9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Frederic Shoberl's English translation of Chateaubriand's Génie du christianisme.<sup>1</sup> In History the Interpreter Kett accepts that William Jones has "satisfactorily shewn" that the Man of Sin is "the Infidel power, which we have seen arise in France".<sup>2</sup> He contends, further, that Antichrist has three branches or forms: the Papal, the Muslim, the Infidel. The Man of Sin is not the only prophetic portrayal of Antichrist as Infidelity: another is the little horn of the fourth Danielic beast, and yet another is the two-horned beast of the Apocalypse. In making this last identification Kett adduces some impressive names as apparent precursors: Bossuet, Grotius, and David Hartley:

"The Bishop of Meaux and the learned Grotius approached more nearly to the truth than has been usually imagined, when they supposed the second beast, to denote PHILOSOPHY, 'falsely so called'. - Dr. Hartley, in the conclusion of his Observations on Man, considers 'INFIDELITY as the Beast'." <sup>3</sup>

And again,

"Sir Isaac Newton, and Dr. Clarke, interpreted 'the reign of the Beast' to be 'THE OPEN AVOWAL OF INFIDELITY' - They farther conjectured, that 'the state of Religion in France, and the manners of the age, combined with the Divine Oracles to announce the approaching reign of the Beast' - And they considered it as probable, that the Ecclesiastical Constitution of France would soon be subverted, and that the standard of

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<sup>1</sup> On Kett see William Prideaux Courtney in DNB. The Beaties of Christianity, by F.A. [sic, for F.- R.] de Chateaubriand, translated from the French by Frederic Shoberl, was published in 3 vols. at London in 1813. Kett, who also anticipated Edward Irving (see Ch. 5, below, section E), thoroughly deserves a place in any further analysis of Romantic influence in English theology.

<sup>2</sup> 3rd. edn., 2 vols. (London, 1800), vol. i, p. 381.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol. i, p. 389. David Hartley did not write the words which appear to be quoted from him. What he said was that "the great Growth of Atheism and Infidelity, particularly amongst the governing Part of these States" was one of six "Things, which seem more especially to threaten Ruin and Dissolution to the present States of Christendom". (2 vols., London 1749, vol. ii, p. 441.)

Infidelity would be first set up there."<sup>1</sup>

Kett believes that Barruel and (independently of Barruel)

John Robison have demonstrated

"that a CONSPIRACY was actually formed for the extinction of Christianity, and the abolition of Government and Social Order, by a set of men whose names demand the execration of mankind", and "that this systematic conspiracy has been the MAIN SPRING of the revolution in France; and that the POWER created by this revolution has, in return, become its chief support and coadjutor".<sup>2</sup>

Kett is a Christian patriot. He regards British naval victories as providential. He praises Britain as a seat of virtues and opulence. The Church of England is "the purest church existing now on earth".<sup>3</sup> The Younger Pitt, who in radical and disaffected circles attracted the bitterest vituperation,<sup>4</sup> is seen (or is one of those seen) by Kett "as raised up by God at this important period, to be the saviour of his country".<sup>5</sup> He explains that, under God, Britain has been protected against Jacobinism, and edified, by "the Society formed for the suppression of vice and immorality, by the express authority of a Royal Proclamation" (1793),<sup>6</sup> and by Sunday schools, and by Hannah More's Cheap Repository, which has distributed "millions of copies of tracts ... among the lower ranks of people".<sup>7</sup> In contrast, "the rebellion in

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<sup>1</sup> Kett, History the Interpreter, vol. i, pp. 389-90.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. ii, pp. 119-20.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol. ii, p. 274.

<sup>4</sup> In 1812 William Richards of Lynn, who represented left-wing Dissenting pacifism (mordantly expressed), portrayed Pitt, "hailed by multitudes as a heaven born minister, the saviour of his country, and the wisest and greatest of statesmen", as really a man of "private revels", "midnight orgies", debts, and insolvency at his death, and (especially) one who pursued a "reign of terror" against those who would not endorse his support of the war against Revolutionary France and his opposition to the reforming movement in Britain. "A spirit was ... by him awakened and set to work, which had lain fast asleep ever since the days of the Stuarts." See John Arthur Oddy, 'The Reverend William Richards (1749-1818) and his Friends: a Study of Ideas and Relationships' (unpublished M.Phil. dissertation, University of Nottingham, 1973), pp. 129-30.

<sup>5</sup> History the Interpreter, vol. ii, p. 276. Kett's language here is vague. Pitt is unnamed in the passage, which may refer to Pitt's ministerial

<sup>6</sup> colleagues also.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 277 & n.

Ibid., p. 279n.

Ireland will give some idea of what may be expected from the junction of Jacobin principles with Popish bigotry and fanaticism."<sup>1</sup> Again, Holland and Switzerland were both fallen: although imbued with Protestantism they had tolerated scepticism.

Another interesting feature of Kett's book is its premillennialism, which was soon to become a rage among the Evangelicals. When infidelity has done its worst with the world, Christ will appear, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. He will deal with the wicked and then inaugurate "a new kingdom of peace and everlasting happiness under the IMMEDIATE GOVERNMENT OF THE SON OF MAN",<sup>2</sup> though Kett seems to hold that this immediacy will not mean "visibility".<sup>3</sup>

#### H. Samuel Horsley

Ecclesiastically speaking, the loftiest of these Tory Churchmen who propose to incorporate infidelity in the portraiture of Antichrist was Samuel Horsley (1733-1806), one of the most learned and energetic Churchmen of the age. Following his controversy with Joseph Priestley over the latter's Unitarian views on the Godhead and the Person of Christ, he was made bishop of St. Davids (1788). In 1793 he was given Rochester, and in 1802 a second translation took him to

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 308n.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>3</sup> In a section of Addenda (ibid., pp. 391-9) Kett prints extracts from "W.A." On the Future State of the Church (1684). (These publication details are in History the Interpreter, vol. ii, p. 399.) This 1684 book, which he did not discover until after he had written his chapter on the premillennial hope, and with which he signifies his general agreement (History the Interpreter, vol. ii, p. 391), quotes Mede: "The presence of Christ in his kingdom shall, no doubt, be glorious and evident; yet I dare not so much as imagine, that it shall be a visible converse on earth: for the kingdom of Christ ever hath been, and shall be, a kingdom whose throne and kingly residence is in heaven", lib. iii. p. 603." (History the Interpreter, vol. ii, pp. 393-4.) Kett does not register any opposition to this teaching.



St. Asaph.<sup>1</sup> His political reaction to the French Revolution was made remarkably clear. On 30 January 1793, the anniversary of the execution of Charles I, Horsley preached a vigorous sermon in Westminster Abbey, before the assembled House of Lords.<sup>2</sup> His text was Romans 13 : 1 ("Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers"). He bitterly attacked the common assumption that there had been a "State of Nature",<sup>3</sup> succeeded by an agreement by which, to put an end to anarchy, people had willingly given up some of their freedom to a ruler, with the implication that any ruler who broke the trust this placed in him could properly be cashiered. Horsley describes this theory of magisterial authority as "a fiction", and holds that the primeval narratives in the Bible show that "Mankind, from the beginning never existed otherwise, than in Society and under Government."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On Horsley's life see his great-grandson H.H. Jebb, A Great Bishop of One Hundred Years Ago: being a Sketch of the Life of Samuel Horsley, LL.D. (London, 1909). This well-meaning book, "an effort to preserve some of the more important facts of Bishop Horsley's life" (Prefatory Note, p.v), has been overtaken by later researches, which are showing Horsley's deep interest in the eschatological prophecies. Jebb makes Horsley's celebrated Critical Disquisitions on the Eighteenth Chapter of Isaiah, in a Letter to Edward King (London, 1799) simply an entry in his list of Horsley's works (p. 260); an idea of Horsley's that Napoleon would embark on a course of action which in the prophecies appertained to Antichrist is attributed to illness; and there is no recognition of how central a figure Horsley was in discussions of prophetic exegesis. Such playing-down tendencies were observed by S.C. Orchard in his Cambridge Ph.D. thesis of 1969, 'English Evangelical Eschatology, 1790-1850'. He says (e.g.) "One of the difficulties in writing about Evangelical eschatology is the sense of embarrassment that biographers have felt about recording it. No doubt the Irvingite disturbances contributed to this" (p. 121). The failure of the historicists' forecasts of the End, which was widely expected to be in the 1840s, and (later and more basically) the generally anti-catastrophic and pro-evolutionary tendencies of nineteenth-century advanced thought may be cited as further inhibitory influences.

<sup>2</sup> A Sermon, preached before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in the Abbey Church of St. Peter, Westminster, on Wednesday, January 30, 1793: being the Anniversary of the Martyrdom of King Charles the First (London, 1793).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

"Civil Society, which always implies Government, is the condition to which God originally destined man. Whence the obligation on the citizen to submit to government, is an immediate result from that first principle of religious duty, which requires that man conform himself, as far as in him lies, with the will and purpose of his Maker." <sup>1</sup>

As for Horsley's attempts to answer some objections to his thesis - is he endorsing monarchy as the most superior form of government, or even Divine Right as commonly understood, or what if a sovereign must, in some circumstances, be chosen? - they need not detain us in this present essay on prophecy, any more than his brief message of religious consolation that since God has good ends of his own, the reign of a tyrant "is to be born with resignation, like any other of God's judgements".<sup>2</sup> We shall also omit, with regret, Horsley's fierce summation of the horrors deluging France: a magnificent tirade in a driving succession of verbless sentences, beginning with "Her Government demolished !" <sup>3</sup> and rising to the personal agony of Marie Antoinette: "The Royal Widow's anguish imbittered by the rigour of a close imprisonment ! with hope, indeed, at no great distance, of release - of such release as hath been given to her Lord !" <sup>4</sup> What we shall indicate is that, like William Jones, the bishop laments the precedent set in seventeenth-century England: "O my Country ! Read the horror of thy own deed in this recent heightened imitation ! Lament and weep, that this black French treason should have found its example, in the crime of thy unnatural sons !" <sup>5</sup> "Our contrition ...", <sup>6</sup> he teaches, "will be best expressed" by each setting an example of "a dutiful submission" and of loyalty.<sup>7</sup> "Let us remember, that a conscientious submission to the Sovereign Powers is, no less than

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.22.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.23.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Dean Stanley says that when Horsley "burst into the peroration connecting together the French and English regicides ... the whole of the august assembly rose, and remained standing till the conclusion of the sermon". (Quoted in Jebb, op. cit., p. 110.)

<sup>6</sup> Horsley, A Sermon before the Lords, p.23.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.24.

brotherly love, a distinctive badge of Christ's disciples."<sup>1</sup> And such brotherly love, he urges, should be extended to the exiled French clergy. "None, indeed, at this season", he asserts, "are more entitled to our offices of love, than those, with whom the difference is wide, in points of doctrine, discipline, and external rites; those venerable exiles, the Prelates and Clergy of the fallen church of France, endeared to us by the edifying example they exhibit of patient suffering for conscience sake."<sup>2</sup>

One is reminded, here, of how William Jones, at the end of his Letter to the Church of England (1798) can refer to "the poor fallen Pope of Rome",<sup>3</sup> and, again of how Horsley, in the peroration to his Critical Disquisitions on the Eighteenth Chapter of Isaiah, in a Letter to Edward King (1799),<sup>4</sup> can affirm that he sees "nothing in the sufferings of the aged Pope, which can be cause of exultation and joy, in the heart of any Christian: nothing in the indignities and insults, which have been put upon him by low-born miscreants, a disgrace to the reformed religion, which they profess, but what should excite horror and indignation".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> The context is pity without papalism. Jones is emphasizing how he himself is determined to trust only the wisdom of God. "Knowing the danger of human authority, and the rashness of human speculation, I will depend no more on any philosopher, however great and celebrated, than upon the poor fallen Pope of Rome ..." (Works, vol. vi, p. 249).

<sup>4</sup> London.

<sup>5</sup> Crit. Disquisitions, pp. 107-8. Edward King, whom Horsley knew and admired, had published a theory that the messenger-people of Isa. 18, to be sent to help the Jews, would be the French.

In the Critical Disquisitions Horsley understands Isa. 17 : 12-14 as predicting the eschatological restoration of Israel. At verse 12, however, "the prophet, by a sudden exclamation of surprize (ill rendered 'Woe to') gives notice, that a new scene suddenly breaks upon him": "the armies of Antichrist" are "pouring like a deluge over the land of God's people".<sup>1</sup> But the prophet immediately declares "God shall rebuke them"<sup>2</sup> (v.13), and he forecasts their utter rout. Chapter 18 gives "visions, more particularly declarative of the manner, and of the time, of their [Israel's] deliverance; which", Horsley adds, "nevertheless leave much unexplained".<sup>3</sup> A "messenger-people",<sup>4</sup> skilled in navigation and with "extensive commerce and alliances",<sup>5</sup> is divinely sent to the dispersed Jews; "the banner of the cross ... [will] be lifted up more conspicuously, than ever before; the trumpet of the Gospel ... [will] be sounded more loudly, than ever before."<sup>6</sup>

Some very significant points emerge from Horsley's exegesis. First, he is hardly concerned with the traditional western Antichrist of the paradigm: Rome. Rather is he busy transferring this role to French infidelity. For instance, he says of the messenger-people, "It seems in the highest degree improbable, that the atheistical democracy of France should be the people, for whom the honour of that office is intended. The French democracy, from its infancy to the present moment," he continues crushingly, "has been a conspicuous and principal branch at least of the western Antichrist. The messenger-people is certainly to be a Christian people."<sup>7</sup> Again, Horsley says,

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<sup>1</sup> Crit. Disquisitions., p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 94n.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 95n.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 101-02; cf. p. ~~78~~ 78 n.5.

"I fear, I see too clearly the rise, instead of the fall, of the Antichrist of the West. Or rather I fear, I see him rapidly advancing to full stature and ripe age. His rise, strictly speaking, the beginning of the monster, was in the apostolic age. For it were easy to trace the pedigree of French Philosophy, Jacobinism, and Bavarian Illumination, up to the first heresies. But it is now we see the adolescence of that man of sin, or rather of lawlessness, who is to throw off all the restraints of religion, morality, and custom, and undo the bands of civil society."<sup>1</sup>

Second, taking the view that this Antichrist will be made an instrument of judgement, Horsley hesitates as to exactly where "the judgement will begin, or fall with the greatest severity".<sup>2</sup> Some parts of the Church have been guilty of introducing "superstitions" into "the rites of worship".<sup>3</sup> No doubt he means Rome, at least, but he goes on to indicate guilt in other parts too. Some have introduced "unwarrantable innovations, in the form of church government"<sup>4</sup> (indubitably non-episcopal Protestantism). Some have seen "relaxation of discipline, ... lukewarmness, ... neglect and violation of the ordinary private duties, ... frequent breach of the Ten Commandments": this situation obtains "in those parts where the doctrine, the form of government, and the rites of public worship seem", to Horsley, "the most conformable to the model of the primitive ages";<sup>5</sup> what else can he have in mind but the Church of England? Once more, the effect of this generous distribution of culpability is to dim the glare habitually shone on Rome.

Third, Horsley makes a religious appeal to patriotism, and encourages an anti-French coalition:

"I see nothing in the progress of the French arms, which any nation, fearing God, and worshipping the Son, should fear to resist. I see every thing, that should rouse all Christendom to a vigorous confederate

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 105-6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

resistance. I see every thing, that should excite this country, in particular, to resist, and to take the lead in a confederacy of resistance, by all measures, which policy may suggest, and the valour and the opulence of a great nation can supply." <sup>1</sup>

Fourth, Horsley's study has an element of philosemitism. To him, the Jews are "a people wonderful, from the beginning to this very time, for the special providence which ever has attended them, and directed their fortunes".<sup>2</sup> We shall hear this note again.

In 1800, at his second general visitation of Rochester diocese, Horsley delivered a most vigorous charge which was published - the same year - "at the request of the clergy", as the title-page says.<sup>3</sup> Prominent in this document are the conspiracy-theory of European revolution and Horsley's eschatological concerns.

With reference to Voltaire, he describes how, "by the persevering zeal ... of this miscreant, throughout a long, though an infirm and sickly, life of bold active impiety, a conspiracy was formed of all the wit, the science, the philosophy, and the politics, not of France only, but of many other countries, for the extirpation of the Christian name."<sup>4</sup> Science and philosophy were pressed into the service of materialism. This happened with Newton's physics, though Newton had "repeatedly and explicitly disowned"<sup>5</sup> such misinterpretation of his work; it happened also with Locke's philosophy of knowledge and intellect, which was utilized, by persons who (Horsley interestingly admits) were "more sagacious perhaps in this than their master", to reduce all mind to "a mere system of Vibrations".<sup>6</sup> The materialist propaganda was cleverly disseminated

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 94n.

<sup>3</sup> The Charge of Samuel Lord Bishop of Rochester, to the Clergy of his Diocese, delivered at his Second General Visitation, in the Year 1800 (London, 1800).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.6.

through books of acknowledged academic merit, such as the Encyclopaedia and Condorcet's brilliant production on the mathematics of chance; the "latent moral object" of the latter work, Horsley explains, "was, to insinuate an opinion, that there is no such thing as Certainty; consequently, no such thing as Truth: that verisimilitude (or probability) is the utmost to which we can attain; and that the only standard of verisimilitude is a majority of suffrages".<sup>1</sup> At the same time, "the Illuminés of Bavaria", a society whose vast ramifications were designed to reach even "into the British ? Islands",<sup>2</sup> but whose efforts were controlled by a single head who kept most of the members ignorant of the atheistic aims to which its energies were, in fact, directed. And how astounding have been the results of such machinations ! "We have seen", says Horsley, "an open apostacy of one of the most distinguished nations of Christendom"; and its "democracy ... seems indeed, in many particulars, to be doing the work of Antichrist before he comes, and preparing his way before him".<sup>3</sup> (Horsley's expression suggests he is shifting towards futurism: I shall return to the theme in the second Appendix to Chapter IV.) Christianity has been renounced and persecuted; "times and laws"<sup>4</sup> have been changed through the revolutionary calendar's sweeping Church festivals away; sexual morality has been openly disavowed; "something like the old Pagan Idolatry" has been introduced; and there has been a striking revival of Roman republican usage in "restoring", for instance, "the powers and the titles of the principal magistrates in the different departments".<sup>5</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

"The countries, against which their arms have been turned, either in the West or in the East, have been principally those which formed the body of the Roman Empire. Insomuch that in this odious French Republic, aping the manners, grasping the dominion, speaking to friends and to enemies the high vaunting language of antient Rome, we seem to behold the dreadful Apocalyptic Beast, which, at the time of the desolation of the Pagan whore exhibited in vision to St. John, had been, but was not, but was to be again; we, seem, I say, to behold, in the French Republic, this dreadful monster beginning to rise, in its antient form, out of the raging sea of Anarchy and Irreligion."<sup>1</sup>

Let the clery be alert. "Still the operations of the enemy are going on. Still going on by stratagem. The stratagem still a pretence of Reformation."<sup>2</sup> The Socinians are a broken reed - "the Patriarch of the sect is fled, and the orators and oracles of Birmingham and Essex-street are dumb: or, if they speak, speak only to be disregarded"<sup>3</sup> - but other insidious threats to Christianity may be flourishing instead. Note how nondescript conventicles, with occasional preachers from a distance, have been springing up. "Sunday-schools are opened in connection, with these conventicles. There is much reason to suspect, that the expences of these schools and conventicles are defrayed by associations formed in different places."<sup>4</sup> "It is very remarkable," observes Horsley, "that these new congregations of non-descripts have been mostly formed, since the Jacobins have been laid under the restraint of those two most salutary statutes, commonly known by the names of the Sedition and the Treason Bill. A circumstance which gives much ground for suspicion, that Sedition and Atheism are the real objects of these institutions."<sup>5</sup> "The teachers of all these congregations agree" in abusing

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-20.



"the Established Clergy, as negligent of their flocks, cold in their preaching, and destitute of the Spirit".<sup>1</sup> Let the Methodists, who join them in this, be watchful, however good their own intentions may be.

"The Jacobins of this country, I very much fear, are, at this moment, making a tool of Methodism, just as the illuminées of Bavaria made a tool of Free-masonry; while the real Methodist, like the real Free-mason, is kept in utter ignorance of the wicked enterprize the counterfeit has in hand."<sup>2</sup>

# I. George Stanley Faber

Jones of Nayland had identified French atheism as the Man of Sin; Samuel Horsley saw it as manifesting Antichrist; and in G.S. Faber's book A Dissertation on the Prophecies ... relative to the Great Period of 1260 Years ..., first published in 1805, almost the entire Median paradigm is scrutinized from the new Tory viewpoint. In this sense, Faber is a Kett writ large. More accurately, one should say "very large", since Faber was an impressive writer and an impressive Christian. Although A Dissertation suffers from a prodigal use of italics, and so looks like the marked-up script of a dramatic and vehement speech to the somewhat dull, it is also learned, well-planned, elegantly-written, and powerfully-argued in an almost forensic way, the author displaying dialectical resourcefulness and particularly excelling in taking-up an opponent's assumption and travelling along with it to the point where it precipitately tumbles into the ditch which Faber has foreseen.

The author's career was long and distinguished. Of confessing Huguenot descent, and a son of Calverley parsonage in Yorkshire, Faber was born in 1773 and was educated at Hipperholme Grammar School and University College, Oxford. At one time he was a Fellow and tutor of Lincoln. In

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

1801 he was Bampton Lecturer. After his marriage, which Horsley solemnized, he became his father's curate. Eventually he held three livings successively in Co. Durham. The third of these was Long Newton, where he remained for twenty-one years from 1811. His last appointment was as Master of Sherburn Hospital, on improving which he spent large sums of his own money. He lived until 1854.<sup>1</sup> As a writer he was tireless. Faber tries to introduce a new rigour into the business of decoding the prophetic language. The preface to the first edition of his Dissertation on the Prophecies states,

- "The work, which is here offered to the Public, is founded upon the three following very simple principles.
1. To assign to each prophetic symbol its proper definite meaning, and never to vary from that meaning;
  2. To allow no interpretation of a prophecy to be valid, except the prophecy agree, in every particular, with the event to which it is supposed to relate;
  3. And to deny that any link of a chronological prophecy is capable of receiving its accomplishment in more than one event." 2

Another preliminary point is worth noting. Faber takes up a refinement of Mede which, we have observed, was advocated by Whiston. Mede had held

"that the six first vials belong to the sixth trumpet, and that the effusion of the seventh vial synchronizes with the first blast of the seventh trumpet ...<sup>3</sup> The arrangement, adopted by several writers in Mr. Mede's time, and more recently by Bp. Newton and many other commentators, appears to me to be far preferable to that of Mr. Mede: the truth of it indeed seems to be capable of little less than absolute demonstration. These authors maintain, that, as the seventh seal comprehends all the seven trumpets, so the seventh trumpet comprehends all the seven vials." 3

The practical result, as Faber points out, is to throw forward the

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<sup>1</sup> On G.S. Faber's life see George Clement Boase in DNB and Francis A. Faber's Prefatory Memoir of G.S. Faber in the latter's The Many Mansions in the House of the Father (London, 1854).

<sup>2</sup> A Dissertation on the Prophecies, 4th. edn. (1810), vol. i, p. ix.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol. i, pp. 51-2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.54.

finishing of "the mystery" "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel ... towards the end of those days, not at their beginning".<sup>1</sup> In other words, 1789 does not indicate the absolute imminence of the End. Even Bonaparte's domination of the western portion of the former Roman Empire represents but the fourth of the vials.

In Faber, as in some other Tory Churchmen, we perceive a relative leniency towards Rome. He tells his readers that "our reformers never thought of unchurching the church of Rome; though they freely declared it to have 'erred, not only in living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith'. Hence," he continues, "while they rejected its abominations, they did not scruple to derive from it their line of episcopal and sacerdotal ordination; well knowing, that holiness of office is a perfectly distinct thing from holiness of character."<sup>2</sup> And he comments thus on a contemporary exegete,

"At the present juncture, when Popery once more begins to rear its hydra head, a full statement of its abominable principles was peculiarly seasonable. This has been most satisfactorily executed by Mr. Whitaker: but he appears to me at the same time to have exceeded his commission, in branding the Papacy with the title of Antichrist."<sup>3</sup>

Faber explains that the famous 1260 prophetic years are equal to the same number of conventionally-calculated years, as any substantial quantity of Jewish years would be, since in order to ensure that their religious festivals were celebrated at the correct season and did not "drift" because of their deficient calendar, the Jews intercalated the extra days needed. These 1260 years are dominated by the Papacy, which is the little horn of the Danielic Roman beast; it is also a revival of the ten-horned Apocalyptic beast, its resurgence probably dating

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.54n.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. ii, p. 155n.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol. i, p. xi (in Preface to 1st edn.).

from 606, the year of Phocas' grant of the title "Universal Bishop" to Boniface III. This spiritual empire is one of the three great apostasies foreseen in prophecy, yet it cannot be the Antichrist, for Antichrist's badge is the open, public denial of the Father and the Son (1 John 2 : 22; cp. Jude 4 and 2 Pet. 2 : 1).

The second apostasy probably arose simultaneously with the first, since it was also in 606 that Muhammad retired to the cave of Hera to devise his religious system, which, on account of its large debt to Christianity, is to be categorized not so much as a totally different creed than as a Christian apostasy. Islam's symbol in prophecy is the little horn of Daniel's he-goat.

Between the Reformation and the end of the 1260 years arises the tyranny of Antichrist proper. Faber quotes Horsley: "The beginning of the monster was in the apostolic age; for it were easy to trace the pedigree of French philosophy, jacobinism, and Bavarian illumination, up to the first heresies: but it is now we see his adolescence."<sup>1</sup> Antichrist was, by stages, revealed during the French Revolution. "It", writes Faber, eloquently,

"professed to establish a limited monarchy, respecting at once the prerogatives of a lawful prince, and the liberties of the people. This only partial revelation of Antichrist deceived numbers, and led them to form the romantic idea, that France was become (to use the detestable cant of the day) a regenerated kingdom. Four years however were not suffered to elapse from the commencement of the revolution, ere the streets of Paris and the provincial towns streamed with the blood of innumerable victims, ere the sovereign himself was brought to the scaffold, ere religion was abolished, and a sort of jumble of atheism and idolatry was established in its stead. In the first year of Gallic liberty, Antichrist was partially revealed: in the fourth year of liberty, and the first year of equality (Aug. 12, 1792), he threw off his mask of toleration, candour, and universal philanthropy; and stood openly revealed in all his native deformity."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. ii, p. 28n.

Antichrist is the wilful king described in Dan. 11 : 36-45.<sup>1</sup> He is contemptuous of all religion. He is the one who publicly denies the Father and the Son; and to be explained along these lines is the statement in Dan. 11 : 37 that the king would disregard "the desire of women": it means that he would disregard the Messiah, whom Hebrew women desired to bear. The god whom he worships, but who was strange to his fathers, Faber declares to be Liberty (which the French have interpreted as "a freedom from all restraint both civil and religious")<sup>2</sup> In accordance with Dan. 11 : 39 the wilful king has conquered other countries and sold for a price the lands in France which belonged to the Church, Crown, and nobility. Faber disputes the idea that the re-establishment of Roman Catholicism in Bonaparte's France must injure his interpretation. The French Church is a mere puppet (he says) of an atheistic State; and in any case prophecy shows that Antichrist must support the Roman apostasy until the 1260 years expire. Moreover, "unless the atheistical power, at some time or another, reunited itself with the head of the papal Apostasy, it certainly could not engage in a holy war along with the false prophet, as we are plainly taught that it hereafter shall do at the close of the 1260 years".<sup>3</sup> In this "holy war" - so runs Faber's interpretation - Antichrist will gather unconverted Jews from his domains and place them in Jerusalem as his allies. Converted Jews, however, will be the allies of a great maritime power, which, by a plan "somewhat alloyed by worldly motives",<sup>4</sup> will collect them, while still unconverted, from those regions of Europe subject to its influence, and ship them to Palestine, where they will be converted. Christ will then be

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<sup>1</sup> Faber quotes Horsley in support of this view: ibid. vol. i, pp. xxiv-xxvi (in Preface to wnd. edn.). Horsley's writings were frequently appealed to in matters of exegesis, as will become clear from this dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. i, p. 406.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 427.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., vol. ii, p. 481.

manifested to subjugate his enemies. "There is reason to think, that the conversion and restoration of Judah, and the expedition and destruction of Antichrist, will occupy a period of not less than 30 years."<sup>1</sup>

But what maritime power is Faber speaking of ? "I shall content myself", he says, "with resting in the conclusion, that the maritime power will be that state of protestant Europe which shall possess a decided naval superiority at the time when the 1260 years shall expire."<sup>2</sup>

Faber expanded Horsley's brief Palestine scenario into quite a narrative, of which the foregoing summary is merely a sketch. Indeed, Faber devoted an entire book to the business: A General and Connected View of the Prophecies ... relative to the Conversion ... of Judah and Israel.<sup>3</sup> A large part of it attempts to elucidate and harmonize numerous prophecies now recognized as never meant to be harmonized; perhaps some were never even meant to be elucidated, at least in the logical sense.

Faber is convinced that the war in which Britain is engaged is a just one. The chief enemy is Antichrist, and it can also be said that we had been "compelled" to enter upon it through "self-defence and wanton provocations".<sup>4</sup> He conjectures that this Protestant kingdom, powerful, courageous and wise, will be principally assaulted in the Satanically-inspired infidel king's expedition, which the Apocalypse has prefigured as the dragon's going to make war with the remnant of the woman's seed.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 479-80.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 489.

<sup>3</sup> 2 vols. (London, 1808).

<sup>4</sup> A Dissertation on the Prophecies, vol. ii, p. 401.

Finally, Faber's sources are historically instructive, as showing how he stands in the tradition of the great paradigm while trying to reshape it under recent influences. He has used (for instance), besides Mede, whose name is "venerable";<sup>1</sup> Bishop Sir Isaac Newton, "that excellent commentator";<sup>2</sup> whose emphasis on the need to learn "the figurative language of the prophets"<sup>3</sup> he fully accepts, and from whose catalogue of symbols he has borrowed; Whiston; Horsley's Tracts and his Critical Disquisitions; and Barruel's Memoirs illustrating the History of Jacobinism.

J. A strict paradigmaticist: Zouch

Amongst a number of contemporaries whose interpretations Faber criticized in his Dissertation on the Prophecies was a Tory Churchman who persisted in the Median outlook. He was Thomas Zouch (1737-1815), an intellectual clergyman who had been a Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge, until 1770, when his health deteriorated. His stance was early attested by his poems. "His lyre", says Francis Wrangham, in his memoir of Zouch, "was strung to the four public incidents, which claimed the gratulations of the loyal and learned at the commencement of the present reign; the Accession of His Majesty, his Marriage, the Birth of the Prince of Wales, and the Peace of Paris."<sup>4</sup> The poet was also politically cautious as well as patriotic, as the business of Zouch and the Yorkshire Association shows. During the American War of Independence, when it became

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol. i, p. 365.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> The Works of the Rev. Thomas Zouch, D.D. F.L.S. Rector of Scrayingham and Prebendary of Durham; with a Memoir of his Life: by the Rev. Francis Wrangham, ed. Francis Wrangham, 2 vols. (York, 1820), vol. i, p. xxxiii. (See also William Prideaux Courtney on Zouch in DNB.)

obvious that the home country was losing, and the ministry of Lord North, too pressed for time to cut administrative costs, was driven to devise new taxes, which were unpopular, and to raise loans, the method of doing which attracted suspicions that the ministry had deliberately handed high profits to the loan contractors, Whig spokesmen like Edmund Burke claimed that the executive was holding on to power by using the influence of the Crown. To such attacks on North in Parliament was added the petitioning rise of bodies from the counties, the most important of which was the Yorkshire Association. In 1780 Zouch's elder brother pushed him on to the Association's committee. But, says Wrangham (who tells us this),

"Zouch, impressed with the ... delicate sensitiveness of the pastoral character, shrunk from the mere possibility of being regarded as an intriguing or a turbulent priest. Whether he thought that the aspect of the times rendered it perilous to attempt any domestic changes, or that the meditated changes were too considerable for the demands of the occasion, or (still more probably) that the teachers of religion are called to a nobler occupation, than to fan the flames of political dissension - it appears certain, that he never attended the meetings of the Committee, and after some time withdrew his name from their list."<sup>1</sup>

Zouch was connected with the Lowthers. His sister had married one (the Revd. Sir William Lowther, Bt.), and two more were his pupils. The Younger Pitt, who needed Lowther support in Parliament, preferred him to a valuable living in East Yorkshire. In 1805 Pitt secured him a prebendal stall at Durham. Two years later the Duke of Portland unsuccessfully offered him the bishopric of Carlisle.

Among other writings on prophecy, Zouch penned a short,

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<sup>1</sup> Zouch's Works, vol. i, pp. xli-xlii.



elegant, sharp-edged, cautiously conservative treatise published at Wakefield in 1800: An Attempt to Illustrate some of the Prophecies of the Old and New Testament. His encomium therein on Mede is magnificent even by the standards of the eighteenth-century paradigmatisers: "If we require a guide or cynosure to direct us in our inquiries after prophetic truth, the venerable JOSEPH MEDE presents himself, as one heaven-directed to assist us."<sup>1</sup> Zouch has the greatest respect, too, for William Jones ("If any name be dear to sacred literature, it is that of the late Mr. Jones of Nayland"<sup>2</sup>), but he nevertheless reaffirms that the Pauline picture of the Man of Sin refers to the Papacy, just as he holds (against Kett) that the little horn in Daniel's vision of the four beasts is not a prediction of "the regicide government of France",<sup>3</sup> and declares that "Mahomet and his Successors were not the Power prefigured by the little horn in the evening-morning vision."<sup>4</sup> In all, contrary to the entire school which had identified the atheistic-anarchistic tendency with some or other of the prophetic symbols, he pronounces,

"The present state of the christian religion in the world suggests no motives to innovate from the commonly received opinion concerning Antichrist.... The kingdom of Antichrist still exists, and hath long existed. ... Though the temporal power of the Pope is suspended; though his cardinals are driven from their palaces, and stripped of their gaudy splendor, yet the spirit of popery, exercising it's usurpation over the minds of men ... is yet alive and vigorous. Her idols, her pictures, her crosses, her relics are still objects of religious adoration. She retains the same corrupt doctrines - observes the same distinction of meats, - the same abstinence from marriage. She maintains the same claim to miracles, and professes the same intolerant principles, the same aversion to heretics. The recent conduct of the

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<sup>1</sup> An Attempt to Illustrate ..., Preface, p. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

Romanists in Ireland, where the genius of popery preserves it's own native disposition, discovers the same bigotry, exciting men to perfidy, massacre and treason. ... That open avowal of atheism and idolatry, which disgraces the history of the age in which we live, is a melancholy consequence of the corruptions of the church of Rome, flowing thence as the stream from the fountain's head; and should not therefore excite our astonishment, as if some new sign of the times had manifested itself."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 229-32.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PARADIGM AND FUTURISM

#### A. A preliminary conspectus

"They [interpreters of the prophecies who lived before the thirteenth century]... (as far as I know, universally) expected an individual Antichrist, who should persecute the saints, as saints, during a period of three years and a half; and I believe that opinion would never have been departed from, if some of the Reformers, with more zeal than knowledge, had not determined that the Pope must be Antichrist; and as the Pope did not suit the terms of the prophecy, they resolved that the terms of the prophecy should be so interpreted as to suit the Pope." (1829.) <sup>1</sup>

Here, put with polemical bite, is the essence of the futurist outlook that became conspicuous in Protestant exegesis during the early nineteenth century, especially after the downfall of Napoleon Bonaparte. The author of this extract was a Church of England scholar, a learned priest who was to become librarian to the Primate; and, paradoxically, he wrote much of the treatise while on a Continental tour undertaken to inspect the work of the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews, an organization sponsored by zealous Protestant paradigmatisers. He was Samuel Roffey Maitland (1792-1866), and his book his second assault on the Median paradigm in three years. Both works reveal animation and logical power, expressing themselves in lively, combative, sometimes heated, prose. And though Maitland was in some ways theologically conservative - by no means <sup>an</sup> a "higher critic" of Scripture in the new, German sense - there can be no doubt at all that he severely damaged the great paradigm, undermining its basis, the historicist time-scale. In the Preface to the second edition of his Enquiry into the Grounds on which the Prophetic Period of Daniel and St. John has been supposed to consist of 1260 Years, <sup>2</sup> he poses the fundamental question, "Is the

<sup>1</sup> S.R. Maitland, A Second Enquiry into the Grounds on which the Prophetic Period of Daniel and St. John has been supposed to consist of 1260 Years (London), p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1837.

period of 1260 years which Mede, and Sir Isaac Newton, and Bishops Hurd and Newton, and their followers, profess to have found in the scriptures, and on which they build their systems, a revealed truth, or a mere fancy?"<sup>1</sup> Maitland pronounces it a mere fancy; and for this and other reasons he concludes that Antichrist is not the Papacy, but is yet to come.

Maitland was not alone in his advocacy of futurism. A trend had set in, and a school soon arose, identifiable from its assumptions, its conclusions, and its personal interconnexions. The rather quiet pioneers of the new movement had been Thomas and William Witherby. The former had included a futurist eschatology in a treatise published as far back as the opening year of the new century; and William had gone on to devote an entire essay of 1818 to an attack on the year-day system. Maitland, who later acknowledged his initial ignorance of this essay, and presumably had not known Thomas's work either, burst on the scene in 1826, a convert from historicism. There were others who had begun as historicists, but turned to futurism. John Henry Newman was one. It was he who was to welcome the publication in 1840 of James Henthorn Todd's first course of Donnellan Lectures, preached in 1838 at Trinity College, Dublin, and pressing a futurist exegesis of the references to Antichrist in Daniel and St. Paul. Newman himself was the author of Tract 83 (1838) which, on the basis of patristic evidence, had also placed Antichrist in the future. Joseph Tyso, who began publishing in favour of futurism in 1838 - seemingly a crowded year in these transactions - showed, since he was a Baptist minister, originally historicist, that futurist doctrine could emerge from a quarter traditionally arch-Protestant. There were other interesting

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<sup>1</sup> p.iv.

developments related to this theme of the emergence of futurism. In 1834 had occurred an historical episode: some material of Bishop Horsley's was published, and was easily patient of a futurist interpretation. The historicist James Hatley Frere, mystified by the death of Napoleon, whom he had considered to be Antichrist, and by the non-appearance for the time being of a second, and final, manifestation of Antichrist, was left, in 1833, looking to the future.

What (in more detail) happened in the futurist movement, and why it happened, the rest of this chapter is concerned to show.

#### B. Thomas Witherby

We have already noticed that the honest Bicheno produced a pamphlet in 1800 called The Restoration of the Jews, the Crisis of all Nations. Within the same year, an offended reader had published a substantial and remarkable counterblast entitled Observations on Mr Bicheno's book ...<sup>1</sup> Bicheno was left-wing; his respondent was right-wing. Bicheno was historicist; the new man publicly introduced explicit futurism into the scholarly Protestant study of the eschatological prophecies.

The writer in question was Thomas Witherby (d. 1830), a lawyer living at Enfield.<sup>2</sup> He was a Churchman, and philosemitic, and

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<sup>1</sup> The title continues entitled The Restoration of the Jews the Crisis of all Nations ... together with An Inquiry concerning Things to Come ... (London, 1800).

<sup>2</sup> Some account of Witherby's life is given in the first Appendix to this chapter.

even somewhat Judaizing.<sup>1</sup> Among yet other interesting features he presented, was an enlightened, deeply Christian, attitude to women.<sup>2</sup> And James Darling's comment of 1854 was totally correct: Witherby "had well considered the subjects he wrote upon".<sup>3</sup>

What Witherby objected to in Bicheno's tract was its French revolutionary hue. He quotes a number of Bicheno's statements, and eloquently and indignantly pursues their implications for the Jews, which (he claims) are these :

"They are taught to expect that they are to follow the steps of the French, and to become more successful than their predecessors: for the French Revolution, greatly as it has distressed and afflicted mankind, has been confined within bounds; but the Jews are taught to expect that they are to become THE REVOLUTIONIZERS OF THE WHOLE WORLD ! Alas ! alas ! do you think that the kingdom of God is to be established upon earth by any thing which will bear the least analogy to the French Revolution ? To an event which was built upon perjuries repeated ! upon sedition ! upon pride ! upon the most disgusting haughtiness ! upon murders the most atrocious ! and upon the most savage ferocity and barbarity ! - Alas ! alas ! are the Jews to be taught that this is the road to their own land ? But this

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<sup>1</sup> Witherby, in his Observations on Bicheno's book, describes himself as a Churchman (p. 224); and the dedication-page of his later work An Attempt to Remove Prejudices concerning the Jewish Nation. By Way of Dialogue (London, 1804) refers to him as "a layman of the Church of England". The philosemitism of this 1804 production is widely apparent in his writings. The title-page of Observations on Bicheno's book says "Dedicated to the Jews", whom he apostrophizes at the start of the address which follows as "DISTINGUISHED NATION !" The same book also shows his Judaizing tendency. In accordance with the apostolic decree of Acts 15, he wants Christian ministers to "instruct the people that it is unlawful for a Christian to eat blood in any way prepared as food; it is as unlawful for him to eat animal food which hath been strangled as it is for the Jew" (p. 224). He also wishes that Christian would join with Jews in commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (ibid., p. 225).

<sup>2</sup> Witherby says (e.g.), "The inhabitants of [apocalyptic] Babylon view women ... as INFERIOR to, and not the equals and dignified companions of men, as the HOLY AND CHRISTIAN STATE OF MATRIMONY considers them" (Observations on Bicheno's book, p. 244).

<sup>3</sup> Cyclopaedia Bibliographica, 2 vols. (London, 1854-9), vol. i (1854), p. 3241.

is not all - the Jews, were they to pay attention to your book, would be taught that they are to struggle for their liberties; that they are to avenge their own wrongs on their persecutors; that they are to attempt to recover their country from the Turk, and for this purpose to join to attack him; that if they are opposed in their way they are to resist; and that it is possible, that the Jews being numerous in those countries where resistance will be made against such return, great consequences may follow ! And that although they may themselves suffer much, yet that the consolation that they may obtain deliverance from captivity, and re-establish their commonwealth, is to be their encouragement in their sufferings."<sup>1</sup>

The hammer-blows of another Tory Churchman upon a latter-day Gentile Zealot !<sup>2</sup> But it was among the ranks of Tory Churchmen that interesting alterations to the great paradigm were emerging: we have seen this in William Jones, Horsley, and G. S. Faber. Now hear Witherby as he issues forth as a futurist. He ridicules Bicheno's conventional application of the famous text which opens Ch. III of the present investigation, i.e. Rev. 11 : 13, about the earthquake in the city. Where, inquires Bicheno's adversary, are the two witnesses, whose preaching, murder, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven immediately precede this Johannine passage ? "Now what, in the name of common sense, is there applicable in this to the French Revolution ?"<sup>3</sup> And what of the manifest conversion of the affrighted remnant ? "What event attendant upon the French Revolution has there been that bears the least analogy to this or any of these things ?"<sup>4</sup> Moreover, "The city in which this earthquake will happen is Jerusalem ... Rev. xi.8)."<sup>5</sup> Even if we apply the earthquake to the French Revolution, which for all his detestation of it Witherby (no doubt trying to preserve some sense of proportion) assesses as "a paltry event",<sup>6</sup> we are not just left

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<sup>1</sup> Observations on Bicheno's book, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> For more about Witherby as a Tory Churchman see Part B of the first Appendix to this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Observations on Bicheno's book, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

searching for the identities and the miraculous deeds of the witnesses; we must also name the murderous Antichrist and discover those persons described as rejoicing in the witnesses' deaths. With futurism in mind, Witherby says, "As Protestants, shall we set our faces against an interpretation or an idea, because it is the idea of the Romish writers ? By no means. Let us ... examine and try them by the word of God."<sup>1</sup> Antichrist's marks are laid down in the Scriptures, and according to Witherby they have been reflected in the recent history of France. "There one may perceive denial of the Father and the Son; "seditious restlessness, and contempt of those in power, and a desire to pull them down";<sup>2</sup> the pride shown by boastfulness and scoffing at true religion; "contempt of the ordinances of God, and marriage in particular, and consequent lasciviousness";<sup>3</sup> covetous scheming by the well-to-do, which produced the Revolution in the first place; "a disposition to scoff at the promises and threatenings of the word of God, which when it attains to maturity assumes the appearance of blasphemy itself";<sup>4</sup> "impurity and sensuality"; "self-exaltation";<sup>5</sup> satanic inspiration; removal of the powers ordained of God in France, and French attempts to do so elsewhere; idolatry, as in the institution of the pantheon and "trees and statues of liberty",<sup>6</sup> with the adding thereto of persecution of the saints, who in this case are Roman Catholics. Yet the monstrous tyranny of Antichrist is definitely still in the future; and Witherby, who is an unhailed master of illustration, describes Antichrist's emergence, apogee, and downfall by a most striking and precise comparison, more impressive than any

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 304.



encountered in the entire literature reviewed in this essay, not excluding Newman's. He says,

"This noxious weed [the spirit of Antichrist] is of long continuance, like the American aloe, it lasts long, and does not arrive to its full maturity until a long tract of years have passed over its head. Observe this aloe, it is surrounded with leaves, which are armed with thorns, and at their extremities they carry a formidable spear. So do the antichristian heretical doctrines point their thorns and spears against, and wound those who cultivate them. Some of its leaves are withered through age; so do heresies wither; and one heresy is frequently the successor of another, and the preceding APPEARS to die away; but it is the same spirit, the same sap, the same nourishment which cherishes them all. Observe its centre, it is smooth as if polished: so do rising heresies bear a smooth appearance, to engage the eye of those who admire them; but the attentive observer can see the thorns in embryo, and he remarks the point, the summit of the plant, which hath its formidable spear in a perpendicular direction, as in defiance of heaven, against which it points. So are there in the midst of surrounding heresies, generally one most conspicuous, one which appears more deceiving and deluding, and which the true Christian thinks to be at the same time more hostile against heaven than the preceding. If he is not well instructed in the word of prophecy, if he is not well informed concerning the nature of this plant, possibly he thinks that this is the very antichrist himself; but time shews him that the point which for a time, until it came to maturity, appeared lifted up, separates from the centre, continues for a time in full vigour, as a leaf, and in succession gives place to others nourished by the same spirit. But he who is informed in the nature of the plant well knows that it will assume a new appearance, that its centre will shoot up to many times the height that it ever yet has done; that it will be then at its full size, full vigour, and armed at all points by its surrounding leaves; that when it hath thus arrived at its summit, when it hath thus continued its time, it will be blasted and wither ! And the Christian who is well instructed in the prophetic page well knows that the great antichrist, who is yet to come, will lift up his head far higher than any who have preceded him; that he will then be armed at all points and have all his blooming honours thick upon him, but will then be blasted to his centre, and all his surrounding associates partake in his destruction." <sup>1</sup>

The destruction of Antichrist's tyranny, immediately before its supersession by the millennial kingdom, will not necessarily

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 104-5.

involve the devastation of England. To be sure, Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, and Bishop Newton had all seen England as one of the ten toes of the doomed Danielic colossus; but their analysis is by no means unquestionable, and even if it were, piety may yet avail with God.

But who will the expected Antichrist actually be? For Witherby, the archetypal identification of Antichrist and Papacy has far faded. Rome no longer means what it so horrifically meant to our Protestant forebears. The tortures are disused. His Holiness depends on Protestant soldiers for protection. He is to be pitied, and preserved from harm. "Shall we suffer an aged man, bowed down by sufferings, to be treated with disrespect, insulted, and possibly torn to pieces, when we have the power to prevent it, because Mr. Bicheno and some others desire to see the fall of the Pope?"<sup>1</sup> Romanism, though corrupt, is still Christianity, just as the Jews incurred divine punishment for sin, but remained the Jews. "Neither the Pope nor the Turk, are as yet at least, this great Antichrist."<sup>2</sup> Whatever Rome may have done, it has not denied the Son's Incarnation. The power described in Rev. 13 will be "FAR WORSE than the papacy".<sup>3</sup> Again, a general rather than an ecclesiastic seems to be depicted there. The papacy, Witherby concludes, rather as G.S. Faber did, is "antichristian"<sup>4</sup> rather than Antichrist.

Another noteworthy thing about Witherby - and once more he points to the way the futurists were to develop their insights - is

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 157. For Faber, the Pope was not the Antichrist, although he would admit him to be an antichrist. See Faber's Dissertation on the Prophecies, that have been fulfilled, are now fulfilling, or will hereafter be fulfilled, relative to the Great Period of 1260 Years, 4th. edn., 2 vols. (London, 1810), vol. i, p. 143n.

his habit of literal interpretation. The stories of the witnesses and of the earthquake are meant literally; the beast's mark will be literal; the judgement the third angel pronounces on those who bear it (Rev. 14 : 9-11) will be literal; the millennium (though not asserted to be a thousand years) will be an actual period of bliss on earth; and, says Witherby's formal statement of his twenty-fourth proposition, "The new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem, are not figurative, but real, and are the high reward of the faithful."<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, given this literalism on top of his futurism, Witherby sits extremely loose to the business of the paradigmatical time-scale. For all practical purposes he has abandoned the year-day theory. Probably, if pressed, he would have taken the days as literal ones, and he certainly expresses thanks that Antichrist's "TIME IS SHORT".<sup>2</sup> One of his propositions is that in the days of Antichrist the Church will be granted wisdom to understand the statements of times and numbers in the Bible. He allows that the exertions spent on seeking to elucidate the 2300 days, the 1260 days, and so on, and the number 666 have not been in vain, because inquiry is useful in itself, and the failure of these investigations teaches us humility, even faith, since "it should lead us to look forward, and to EXPECT that in due time greater light will be given: for these things are recorded chiefly for the USE of those who will be persecuted by the GREAT ENEMY: and we may therefore rest assured, that when the time comes in which they are intended to be brought into precious use, a right understanding will be given."<sup>3</sup> "True Christians" will share "the progression ... in the understanding given to the disciples"<sup>4</sup> of Jesus. Nonetheless, the categorical denial that the "days" were years, and the formulation of a systematic theological

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<sup>1</sup> Observations on Bicheno's book, p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

argument to this effect, were tasks left to Witherby's brother William, the London stationer.

One wonders what immediate literary influences may have lain behind Thomas Witherby's explicit futurism. ( I say "immediate literary" because the futurist movement, taken as a whole, grew upon a vast and troubled landscape, to be discussed later in this chapter/ )<sup>and in the next.</sup> There are, of course, obvious affinities with Jones of Nayland and Bishop Horsley. Like these writers, Witherby sympathizes with the Pope and makes a grim theological assessment of the spirit of the French Revolution. Yet he neither quotes nor cites them in 1800, and does not appear to have been in correspondence with Horsley until 1804,<sup>1</sup> though in his next production, An Attempt to remove Prejudices concerning the Jewish Nation. By way of Dialogue (1804), he quotes from Horsley's Critical Disquisitions on Isaiah 18<sup>2</sup> (1799) and his Charge 3<sup>3</sup> to the clergy of Rochester diocese (1800), both of which show an incipient futurism. According to the Critical Disquisitions, "It is now we see the adolescence of that man of sin, or rather of lawlessness, who is to throw off all the restraints of religion, morality, and custom, and undo the bands of civil society."<sup>4</sup> The Charge declares, "We, seem, I say, to behold, in the French Republic, this dreadful monster beginning to rise, in its antient form, out of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Gentleman's Magazine, 80, new series (1810), 157-8, contains an unsigned notice of Witherby's pamphlet The Wisdom of the Calvinistic Methodists displayed: in a Letter to the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth ... (1810). The reviewer reproduces (p. 158) a letter of 26 May 1804 from Bishop Horsley to Witherby, thanking him for An Attempt to remove Prejudices concerning the Jewish Nation, a copy of which Witherby appears to have sent him. Horsley states his basic agreement with the work, and says, "I wish to know by what coach you receive your parcels." I think the letter reads as one to a new correspondent. Certainly it holds no hint that Horsley had ever addressed the recipient before.

<sup>2</sup> Critical Disquisitions on the Eighteenth Chapter of Isaiah, in a Letter to Edward King, Esq. F.R.S. A.S. (London).

<sup>3</sup> The Charge of Samuel Lord Bishop of Rochester, to the Clergy of his Diocese, delivered at his Second General Visitation, in the Year 1800 (London).

<sup>4</sup> p. 106.

raging sea of Anarchy and Irreligion."<sup>1</sup> The truth probably is that Horsley and Witherby were largely independent runners in the same race, only Witherby pulled slightly ahead when he published his eschatological treatise in 1800 while Horsley was as likely as not too busy to do so (though it has been known since the 1830s that Horsley was speculating at that time about eschatology in a private correspondence).<sup>2</sup>

Witherby's treatise, moreover, specifically castigated the left-wing reading of the earthquake text, drew very near to a thoroughly literal interpretation of the Apocalypse, and seized gratefully on the information that Antichrist's "time is short".

The problem of ascertaining, so far as possible, Witherby's literary background takes a further thought-provoking turn when we observe him referring to writings by two pietistic Lutheran prelates who were students of prophecy, the great expositor and textual critic Johannes Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) and his follower Magnus Friedrich Roos (1727-1803). He also wants their work to be more widely known. The treatise of Roos that he uses is his Illustration of the Present Great and Important Occurrences by the Prophetical Word of God.<sup>3</sup>

Witherby tells us that the translator of Roos is a friend of his; and on this unnamed friend's behalf he solicits subscriptions, in his editorial preface to Roos<sup>4</sup> and in an advertisement suffixed to his reply to Bicheno, to ensure that a translation of Bengel's Exposition of the Revelation, already prepared, is not published at a loss. The Bengel translation, however, does not seem to have appeared, possibly because its potential public was insufficiently impressed by the Roos

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<sup>1</sup> p.11.

<sup>2</sup> On this correspondence see the second Appendix to this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> London, 1797.

<sup>4</sup> Illustration of the ... Occurrences, p. xiii.

venture, upon whose success the Bengel volume avowedly waited.<sup>1</sup> In any case, this public may have been under the impression that Bengel's ideas on eschatology had already been made sufficiently available. Perhaps it could read Bengel's Gnomon Novi Testamenti (1742) in Latin; or perhaps it was satisfied with John Robertson's 1757 volume of selections from Bengel's Exposition rendered into English and given the comprehensive title Bengelius's Introduction to his Exposition of the Apocalypse: with his Preface to that Work, and the greatest part of the Conclusion of it: and also his Marginal Notes on the Text, which are a Summary of the whole Exposition.<sup>2</sup> There was even another work which at least some of this public might consider a useful Bengel resource. It was John Wesley's Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament, which in 1757 had reached its second edition.<sup>3</sup> In this book, Wesley acknowledges an immense personal debt to Bengel for enlightenment about the Book of Revelation, and points out that his own notes on it largely follow Bengel's Erklarte Offenbarung, some use also being made of the Gnomon.<sup>4</sup> Like Robertson, Wesley prints a Bengelian timetable of the fulfilment of prophecy.

Witherby's Germanist friend puzzles me. We are not told that his modesty or his circumstances had made him insist that his name must be withheld; Witherby does not even thank or commend him in his *Roos*

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<sup>1</sup> See the closing lines of the quotation on p.109 below.

<sup>2</sup> London. Robertson translated from the first edition (Stuttgart, 1740) of Bengel's Erklarte Offenbarung; see Translator's Preface, p. xv. J.C.F. Burk, A Memoir of the Life and Writings of John Albert Bengel, translated from the German by Robert Francis Walker (London, 1837), says that Robertson's work was supported by six hundred subscribers "of considerable distinction in England; and it was set on foot chiefly at the instance of the Rev. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist connexion" (p. 338).

<sup>3</sup> London. It was first published in 1754.

<sup>4</sup> pp. 677-8.

preface;<sup>1</sup> and when we recall that Witherby, as will soon be revealed by quotation, had been greatly affected by his initial discovery of Bengel, subsequently devoting "much time" to studying his writings, it seems possible that, just as John Wesley was so intrigued by the Moravians that he set himself to learn German to talk to them, Witherby may have studied the language to read the German of the great Pietist, and so was himself this curiously identity-less translator.

Very many present-day Christians know of Bengel: his observations have been quoted in popular Bible-reading notes as well as in more extended works. Yet it is perhaps not widely recognized that Bengel's theology was eschatologically orientated. In the words of his descendant and biographer J.C.F. Burk, who had access to copious unpublished material, "Bengel's inferences from prophecy were not the dry notions of a mere biblical scholar; but the living convictions of a christian believer. Thus did his apocalyptical system so enshrine all his principles of life and conversation, that only through that medium could he contemplate either political events and designs, the condition and affairs of the church of Christ, or those of science in general."<sup>2</sup> As early as before 1724, when brooding over Rev. 21 and recalling the Englishman Potter's understanding of its numbers as relating to those of Rev. 13, Bengel had perceived the possibility of a key to the obscure chronological statements in the Apocalypse. He went on to wonder whether 42 months and 666 were not somehow equal. The verb in 13 : 18 means "calculate". Surely the only calculation possible

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<sup>1</sup> Observations on Bicheno's book does, one has to admit, contain a reference to an apparently real Germanist, though it is nevertheless general. After quoting a passage from Bengel, Witherby says, "Highly as I conceive myself indebted to the translator of Bengelius (see advertisement at the end) I must profess my opinion upon this matter: for the reasons before given, I think that the papacy is not described in Rev. xiii. but a power FAR WORSE ..." (p. 156).

<sup>2</sup> Memoir of the Life and Writings of Bengel, p. 311.

was the division of 666 by 42, which gives  $15\frac{6}{7}$ . Might not one "prophetic" month, therefore, be the same as  $15\frac{6}{7}$  ordinary years ? As to the question of when to read prophetic times or ordinary times in the Revelation, the answer Bengel gave was that the former preceded the third woe, the others followed it.<sup>1</sup>

Bengel's calculations have, of course, been heavily criticized: the key charge is that of arbitrariness. Witherby does not, in this business, follow him; indeed, we have already seen that he sits extremely loose to the whole topic of chronological reckonings, trusting that light will be divinely given when it will be needed. Nevertheless, there are features of Bengel's work which may have (at the most) prompted Witherby's theories, or (at the least) served to confirm ideas which he may already have arrived at. The hypothesis that Witherby drew his notions basically from Bengel, though not uncritically so, cannot be proved, I think; but it appears a few shades more probable than the alternative, if only because Bengel was the greater theologian and his work widely diffused in England. We have already remarked about the Bengel selections translated by John Robertson in 1757, about the Bengelian influence on John Wesley's notes on the Apocalypse, and about the possibility of reading the Gnomon Novi Testamenti in Latin. There are two interesting parallels between Bengel's work and Witherby's. To take a small point first, it is a defensible guess that Witherby's

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<sup>1</sup> See ibid., pp. 283-4, 287-8. The Potter mentioned would be Francis Potter (1594-1678), clergyman, artist, and practical man of science, whose speculation about the number 666 was shown in MS. to Mede, who praised it, and was published as An Interpretation of the Number 666 (Oxford, 1642; reprinted Worcester, 1808). See Herbert Edward Douglas Blakiston on Potter in DNB.



remarkable figure of the American aloe grew from a recollection of a roughly comparable image in Bengel. Robertson gives this uncommon botanical expression :

"In what manner the Interpretations of the Apocalypse have varied from the earliest times of the Christian Church to our days; and how, amidst the frequent enlargings of the limits of the Time in consequence of these variations and of the manifest mis-reckonings, the Truth, like the Heart-blade or Spire in a plant, has remained unhurt; and how even the Fibres and Shoots of the right sense, that were torn off and secreted, are found all together in an Interpretation now at length growing up to maturity; this, I say, is deduced and laid before you in the Conclusion." <sup>1</sup>

The second point, the main one, is that Bengel, though his scheme is partly historicist, with the beast from the sea active for 666 Bengelian years from 1143 (i.e. until 1810) and then quiescent, is nonetheless an expositor who may be looked upon as having put about ideas that ultimately helped to break up the entire historicist frame. He condemns the year-day equation in the most express manner :

"The word day is not any where in the Scripture put for the word year; as Bishop Forbes, on the Apocalypse, p. 85, has long ago observed." <sup>2</sup>

"He who has once laid aside this prejudice of the Year-Day, will find out the root of most of the forced interpretations: and if he knows of any inquisitive friend, will caution him against a fruitless labour in which many have wasted the greatest part of their life-time." <sup>3</sup>

He also remarks that "Matters might be more easily adjusted by those that should take a Day in the usual acceptance of the word for twenty-four Hours", and he observes, "This opinion is not only very common in the church of Rome, but also at this time much liked by many Protestants in Germany. Petersen's System stands upon this footing ..." <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bengelius's Introduction to his Exposition of the Apocalypse, pp. (vvii) - (xviii).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

Bengel will not, of course, allow that the principle is applicable throughout the Revelation: "particularly the common Day will by no means suit in the three Woes."<sup>1</sup> Where it will suit is in the most vehement phase of the bestial kingdom. This is to be in the future, and it will last for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  literal years. Witherby cites Bengel's theory that the medieval Papacy was the Antichrist of Rev. 13, that it would suffer a temporary fall, and that it would be powerfully reanimated before suffering its fearful end. Naturally, Witherby is reluctant to accept that the reanimated beast will be the Papacy, but he endorses Bengel's excursion into futurism, declaring, "This part of the testimony of Bengelius remains firm, that the great antichrist, in his greatest malignancy, is yet to come."<sup>2</sup>

It ought to be added that the warmth with which Witherby relates, in his Roos preface of 1797, the religious impact Bengel's writings had on him surely suggests admiring and gratified discipleship:

"It pleased God, in his good providence, some few years ago, to give the editor access to some of the writings of Dr. John Albert Bengelius; who, although he was raised to one of the highest stations admitted in the German Lutheran church, and of the university of Tubingen was many years a principal professor, yet there is manifest in all parts of his writings which have come under the editor's observation, such a caution lest he should speak unadvisedly in his own name, and assume or claim a participation of that honour which is due to God alone ! - such a deep impression of the free grace of God in Christ Jesus - such a love to the word of God - and such a firm faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Christ, the mediator between God and man, the great atonement, and, in one word, the Saviour ! that the editor hath been induced to spend much time in the study thereof; and if this tract, which is written by a dignitary of the German Lutheran church, and a follower of Dr. Bengelius, is well received by the churches in England, it is intended to publish the great work of Dr. Bengelius, called 'An Exposition of the Revelation', which is already translated."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Observations on Bicheno's book, pp. 156-7.

<sup>3</sup> An Illustration of the Present Great and Important Occurrences, pp. xii-xiii.

Wetherby handles Roos' work with the same relative independence he displays with Bengel's. Roos, identifying Rome as the Apocalyptic Babylon, went on to teach that after Papal Rome's destruction by the ten kings who hate the whore, it would be rebuilt under Antichrist as his capital, taking on the commercial and maritime description found in Rev. 18; then it would be destroyed a second time (Roos claimed), on this occasion by an earthquake. Wetherby agrees, but he presents an exegetical case for supposing that "Babylon" will be renewed at Constantinople, not Rome.

On Thomas Wetherby we should finally add that he was a premillennialist, writing (e.g.), "The effect that will be produced upon those CHRISTIANS who are alive at the coming of our Lord, previous to the commencement of the Millennium of the saints in heaven, and the Millennium of peace and happiness in his kingdom upon earth, is minutely described by the holy apostle Paul, in the 4th chapter of his first epistle to the Thessalonians ..." Wetherby then quotes verses 13-17.<sup>1</sup>

#### C. William Wetherby

Thomas's brother, whose theological discourse sometimes looks a trifle homespun in comparison with his own, but was nevertheless another interesting pioneer in futurist exegesis, was born in 1758 and died at Islington on 19 July 1840. Originally apprenticed in March 1772 to Charles Rivington II, he was turned over to his father Thomas Wetherby the next month, and freed by him in March 1779. (The Wetherby firm, still existing, was founded in 1740.) Like his father, William was for a number of years (1804-20) common councillor for Langbourne ward. For the year 1821-2 William presided as Master

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<sup>1</sup> An Attempt to Remove Prejudices concerning the Jewish Nation, p. 494.

of the Worshipful Company of Stationers, and at the time of his death he was senior member of its Court of Assistants.<sup>1</sup>

There are pointers to his intellectual background, though they are only general. Presumably he was influenced by, or even influenced, his brother the lawyer. Bengel also will be somewhere there, one suspects, though Witherby seems never to mention him. Additionally, it has to be recalled that for long years a theological light burnt conspicuously in the London book trade. Top printers in their day were William Bowyer the elder (1663-1737), a Non-juror (in 1724, at least), who wrote a defence of Charles I as martyr against John Toland the deist ("Amyntor"),<sup>2</sup> and William Bowyer his son (1699-1777), "the learned printer", a lifelong Non-juror who studied at Cambridge, though he took no degree, and famously edited the Greek Testament in 1763, besides being printer to the House of Commons, the Society of Antiquaries, and the Royal Society. This younger Bowyer took John Nichols (1745-1826) of the Literary Anecdotes as an apprentice in 1757 and as a partner in 1766.<sup>3</sup> Nichols, whose friends included Dr. Johnson and Bishop Hurd, republished the 1763 Greek Testament and, with assistance, produced a third edition of another theological undertaking by Bowyer files, the Critical Conjectures and Observations on the New Testament. It is also interesting to observe that Nichols came from Islington (where William Witherby lived), to

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<sup>1</sup> The dates of William Witherby's birth and death, and a reference to the offices he held in the Stationers' Company, are in the Gentleman's Magazine obituary notice of him, 14, new series (1840), p. 218, col. 2. The references to Williams's and his father's municipal careers, and some account of the Witherby firm, are available in Ian Maxted, The London Book Trades, 1775-1800: a Preliminary Checklist of Members (Folkestone, 1977), p. 251. I have extracted the history of William's apprenticeship from D.F. McKenzie (ed.), Stationers' Company Apprentices, 1701-1800 (Oxford, 1978), p. 384, col. 2. Witherby & Co. is the parent company of the publishing concern mentioned in Part A of the first Appendix to this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> On this William Bowyer see John Westby-Gibson in DNB.

<sup>3</sup> On William Bowyer the younger, see John Westby-Gibson, ibid.

which he returned - more or less in retirement - in 1803, and that the next year he was one of Witherby's predecessors as Master of the Stationers' Company.<sup>1</sup> Yet another learned printer was James Nichols, 1785-1861, unrelated to John, a Northerner come to London, who wrote theological works, especially in ecclesiastical history, and attracted favourable notice from Robert Southey and the divines Edward Bickersteth and J.H. Todd.<sup>2</sup>

One of the matters which William Witherby's papers<sup>3</sup> might have enlarged on for us was his correspondence with S.R. Maitland, who in the preface to his Second Enquiry (1829) writes,

"At the time when my Enquiry was published [i.e. 1826], I was not aware that the literal interpretation of the 1260 days had been maintained in a work recently published.<sup>b</sup> I mention this, not only that I may offer my thanks to the author, for that and for other works on the subject, for which I am indebted to his kindness; but because, in some parts, the line of argument is so similar to that which I have myself followed, that the readers of that work might reasonably think me guilty of having borrowed from it without acknowledgment."<sup>4</sup>

And in note b Maitland cites Witherby's two futurist books: A Review of Scripture, in Testimony of the Truth of the Second Advent, the First Resurrection, and the Millennium, which was published in 1818 under the pseudonym "A Layman", and Hints humbly submitted to Commentators; and more especially to those who have written elaborate Dissertations on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation of St. John (1821).<sup>5</sup>

The earlier of these books Maitland went on to characterize

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<sup>1</sup> On John Nichols see George Atherton Aikin, ibid.. George Strahan (1744-1824), vicar of St. Mary's, Islington, from 1772 until his death, and a friend of Dr. Johnson, was the son of a famous printer, William Strahan (1715-85). See (e.g.) Thomas Seccombe, ibid., art. 'Strahan, William'; and Samuel Lewis, jnr., History and Topography of the Parish of St. Mary, Islington, in the County of Middlesex (London, 1842), pp. 111-12.

<sup>2</sup> See Henry Richard Tedder on James Nichols in DNB.

<sup>3</sup> Inquiries have so far not revealed any.

<sup>4</sup> pp. v-vi.

<sup>5</sup> Both published at London.

as "a w rk containing many suggestions which I believe to be original, and which certainly well deserve the consideration of the writers on prophecy".<sup>1</sup> From so keen a scholar this was a recommendation indeed ! We cannot say, bearing works like Thomas Witherby's and Samuel Horsley's in mind, that William suddenly appeared, alone, and laid his axe to the high and exuberant, yet decaying historicist tree; but what, in fact, did he do to enlarge the notch made earlier ? What did he say in 1818 ?

Analysis may distinguish at least six arguments which Witherby uses to deny the truth of the year-day time scale. First, he contends that a short span of 42 literal months "is consonant to the History of the Divine Judgments, which we find recorded in the Old Testament ... We see Pharaoh seated on his throne, exulting in his power, and saying, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go ? ...' : and, in the short space of a few weeks, we see him overwhelmed in the sea, and hear the timbrels of Israel sounding the praises of God."<sup>2</sup> Second, with "Archdeacon Woodhouse", Witherby rejects the A.V. rendering "things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1 : 1) in favour of "things which must come to pass in a short time", i.e. the events (Witherby claims) will be of brief duration.<sup>3</sup> Third, Witherby cautions expositors against attracting the censure attached to adding to or subtracting from the Apocalypse (22 : 19), and against losing the

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<sup>1</sup> Second Enquiry, p. vin.

<sup>2</sup> A Review of Scripture, Introduction, p. xxi.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pp. 21-2. John Chappel Woodhouse (1750-1834) was educated at Christ Church, Oxford. He rose to become Dean of Lichfield. See James Darling, Cyclopaedia Bibliographica, vol.i, p. 3256. Witherby's reference is to The Apocalypse, or Revelation of Saint John, Translated; with Notes Critical and Explanatory. To which is prefixed a Dissertation on the Divine Origin of the Book; in Answer to the Objections of the late Professor J.D. Michaelis (London, 1805). Woodhouse's annotation says, "The same expression /"which must come to pass in a short time"/ is seen to recur at the close of the book /a note refers to Rev. 22 : 6/; and we may collect from it, that the events foretold in this prophecy begin to be fulfilled even from the time of its delivery, and are to follow in a rapid succession until the final consummation" (p.5). Woodhouse was thoroughly historicist, referring even to the 1260 years; but he gave Witherby an opportunity, and the latter pounced.

blessing promised to those who keep it (1 : 3), by substituting other periods of time for those it actually mentions, namely years for days. In the fourth place we are reminded that previous execrable "potentates"<sup>1</sup> - Antiochus Epiphanes, Caligula, Nero - flourished but a short time only; short too, Witherby deduces, will be the reign of Antichrist. And (fifth) "the times of the witnesses are connected with the times of the Antichrist; they are evidently on the theatre at the same time, and from the text itself [a favourite expression of Witherby's] they are all clearly individuals of the human race."<sup>2</sup> So we are dealing with human days, not historical eras. Lastly, by a somewhat obscure, or perhaps simply feeble, argument, Witherby suggests (if I interpret him correctly) that the beast's career, considered as a whole, suggests a span of time which will be short rather than long.<sup>3</sup>

Witherby is obliged to conclude, therefore, that Antichrist has not yet appeared; and he maintains that the Temple will be restored (Rev. 11 "is indisputable evidence" of this), and that the abomination of desolation mentioned in Dan. 7 will be "an idolatrous worship, intended by" Antichrist "to supersede the worship of the one only true God".<sup>4</sup> He also expects a literal millennium, and, indeed, he is yet another premillennialist, like his brother and like Kett. Quoting Matt. 19 : 27-29, Mark 10 : 30, 1 Cor. 15 : 35-38, 43-44, 49, and Rom. 8 : 11, 16-23, Witherby writes,

"These texts clearly point to a renovation or changing of our mortal bodies, at the coming of our Lord, - then will the body be redeemed from the grave, and even the creature itself delivered from the bondage of corruption,

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<sup>1</sup> A Review of Scripture, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See ibid., pp. 24-5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

- then will reward be given unto his servants, the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear his name, small and great, and then will the elders reign on the earth, in which state of felicity will they continue during the thousand years." <sup>1</sup>

Witherby's treatise of 1821, published under his own name, insists, as does his brother's of 1800, that Antichrist will be a military person: "The first beast, or, as he is usually termed, the Anti-christ, viz. chap. xiii. 1-10, is more descriptive of a conqueror or desolator, as it is said, 'who can make war with him?' he is, therefore, not a priest but a fighting man." <sup>2</sup>

Witherby endeavours to produce some new arguments to support his literalism. Thus, for instance, he denies that Ezek. 4 : 6 justifies the adoption of the year-day system, "a structure which", he says, "entirely removes the words of Scripture"; <sup>3</sup> elsewhere he advances to calling the system a "delusion". <sup>4</sup> Again, with reference to St. John's being told in Rev. 4 : 1 "Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter", Witherby comments,

"Now the word hereafter, in its ultimate signification, points to the time of the end; and from the 11th to the 21st ver. of the 19th chapter, we have an awful description of the second advent of our Lord: we are therefore led to conclude, that all described from the beginning of the 4th to the close of the 19th chapter, have not reference to Ecclesiastical history, but are descriptive of events which will become accomplished shortly previous to the second advent of our Lord: thus the assemblage of Israel in their tribes ..." etc. <sup>5</sup>

He also emphasizes that the end will not arrive before the Gospel has been preached worldwide; therefore we must do all we can to spread the Gospel, giving "assistance to all Bible Societies and Missionary Societies, under whatsoever denomination they may assume as to their

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 56-7.

<sup>2</sup> Hints humbly submitted to Commentators, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-15.



more immediate labours; also to all Societies for the Education of Children, provided they have the Holy Scriptures given them".<sup>1</sup>

One feels that Witherby had largely ceased, by 1821, to break new ground, strain as he might. The futurist movement now needed real scholarship, in history as well as in theology, for its continued advance, not to mention the different viewpoint of a newer generation. Within five years it began to receive these in the person of the redoubtable Maitland, the first man to apply nineteenth-century historical criticism to Mede's great paradigm, a writer with cutting edge, astringency, and withal a wry humour, this last quality in particular being an asset not usually brought to such investigations.

#### D. Samuel Roffey Maitland

Maitland, a Londoner, had the educational advantage of early contact with an enthusiastic and learned individual who held an unusual view about a remarkable matter of literary importance. The individual was Launcelot Sharpe, who was on the staff of Merchant Taylors' and who tutored Maitland in an interval between the cessation of his desultory schooling in various private academies and his entry to Cambridge; the remarkable matter was the origin of the Rowley poems of Thomas Chatterton. Sharpe - incorrectly, as W.W. Skeat demonstrated in 1871, five years after Maitland's death - denied that the poems were pseudepigraphical. Maitland never forgot this topic. By a more conventional standard too, Sharpe's tuition was successful; for his pupil became an omnivorous reader. At Cambridge he acquired a taste for Hebrew and Arabic. He also read for the Bar, and was called in 1816; but it was soon obvious that his real interests were theological. Likewise, originally a Dissenter, he became by 1823 an incumbent in the Established

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

Church. His Continental tour has already been alluded to. From 1826 appeared his series of attacks on the great Median paradigm, first on the year-day equation, then on the representation by historicist exegetes of certain medieval sects as proto-Protestants, not to say as the enigmatic witnesses of Rev. 11. Maitland spent ten years from 1838 as librarian to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Subsequently he lived at Gloucester in a state of active scholarly retirement.<sup>1</sup>

William Witherby was one critic of the year-day system; Trinity College, Dublin, had apparently produced others, only they seem to have been fairly silent. In a passage in his Letter to the Rev. William Digby ... occasioned by his Treatise on the 1260 Days (1831),<sup>2</sup> Maitland first recalls how as a layman he always had an untroubled belief in the famous equation, reading G.S. Faber's works "very assiduously"<sup>3</sup> and with intellectual contentment. He then continues, with curious, and now maddening, taciturnity as to names,

"So things went on until between nine and ten years ago, when I chanced to be in company with ... an Irishman, bred to the church, in Trinity College, Dublin. Happening, in the way of civil discourse, to say something of the 1260 years, he took me up (as, by your leave, some of your countrymen are apt to do) rather smartly, but all in perfect good humour, and asked me 'How I could believe that system?' I was a good deal startled, and such was my ignorance at that time, that without considering the difference between our breeding, I ventured to reply. We discussed the matter; and I soon found, as might have been expected, that my friend knew more of the matter than I did; and I was led to feel a strong suspicion that he was in the right. When he had left me, I pursued the enquiry almost in silence, for I knew scarcely any one who would have taken the trouble to talk about the matter, until, after about three years, another gentleman, also bred to the church, in Trinity College, Dublin, was kind enough to give me a visit. I found that he agreed with me; and he was the means of bringing me

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<sup>1</sup> For an outline of Maitland's life see Augustus Jessopp in DNB.

<sup>2</sup> London.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Digby, p.6.

into a very interesting, and instructive, correspondence with a third gentleman, a doctor of divinity, and a senior fellow of the same college; and when I published my First Enquiry, I did not know that there were any men in the world, but those three, who were prepared to agree with me."<sup>1</sup>

S.C. Orchard has suggested that one of these Irishmen was William Burgh (later De Burgh) (1801-66)<sup>2</sup>. A broad case may be made for this identification. Burgh, a clergyman of the Church of Ireland, was indeed a Trinity man, awarded his B.A. in 1821.<sup>3</sup> The same year, he published pseudonymously, as "An Humble Expectant of the Promise", a short, well-argued, literalist treatise called The Coming of the Day of God,<sup>4</sup> which concentrated on establishing premillennialism. Not a line in it can be made firmly to support either historicism or futurism; but, apparently, Burgh then quickly developed futurist opinions, since he said later, "I very soon after [i.e. after publishing this work] was convinced from the examination of Scripture of another expectation ... - The revelation of a personal Antichrist before the Lord's coming; and of the necessity of admitting many prophecies to be yet unfulfilled, and in the prospect of fulfillment to be more literal than expositors have represented."<sup>5</sup> Thus he may have been a futurist as early as 1822. James Henthorn Todd could not have been one of these Irishmen: he did not make Maitland's acquaintance until 1833.<sup>6</sup> With these names, we run out of Irishmen with the appropriate background and known to have been in favour of the literal

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Charles Orchard, 'English Evangelical Eschatology, 1790-1850' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1969), p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> James Henthorn Todd (ed.), A Catalogue of Graduates who have Proceeded to Degrees in the University of Dublin, from the Earliest Recorded Commencements to July, 1866: with Supplement to December 16, 1868 (Dublin, 1869), p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> Dublin. Now a rare work; there is a copy in the National Library of Ireland. The 2nd. edn. (Dublin) followed in 1826.

<sup>5</sup> Lectures on the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Connected Events (Dublin, 1832), Preface, p.v.

<sup>6</sup> See Elizabeth Marion Todd on J.H. Todd in DNB.

interpretation of the 1,260 days.

Maitland's Enquiry into the Grounds on which the Prophetic Period of Daniel and St. John has been supposed to consist of 1260 Years<sup>1</sup> (for short, his First Enquiry) differs from William Witherby's treatises of 1818 and 1821 as being obviously the work of a trenchant writer, a minor master of learned debate, and a formidable inquirer into the origins of received opinions. In his Second Enquiry into the Grounds on which the Prophetic Period of Daniel and St. John has been supposed to consist of 1260 Years (for short, his Second Enquiry), Maitland includes a useful summary of the entire case presented by the two Enquiries. I shall follow this summary; the illustrations will be drawn from both the publications.

First, closely scrutinizing the evidence, he argues that Scripture does not admit the year-day equation. Second, as the quotation which opens this present chapter shows, the entire idea is a novelty, unheard of before the thirteenth century. Third, the equation is further condemned by the wildly different exegeses based on it. Some fundamental error is present, and it is the year-day system. On this error Maitland, in the Second Enquiry, and possibly guided by Thomas Witherby's references to Bengel in a parcel of books William had sent him,<sup>2</sup> quotes a dictum of the great Pietist as translated by Robertson in 1757 and already reproduced above (p 108). Maitland says, "I believe ... that the fundamental error was long ago pointed out by Bengel, and that he was quite right when he said -

'He who has once laid aside the prejudice of the year-day, will find out the root of most of the forced interpretations.'

<sup>3</sup> The fourth

<sup>1</sup> London, 1826.

<sup>2</sup> Maitland wished to thank William Witherby for his Hints humbly submitted to Commentators "and for other works /including Thomas Witherby's ?/ on the subject, for which I am indebted to his kindness" (Second Enquiry, Preface, p. vi & n).

<sup>3</sup> Second Enquiry, p. 86.

argument follows naturally from the third: it is that no single historicist exposition has carried conviction in the Church. "Surely," Maitland urges, "if any one of these had been Aaron's rod it would have swallowed up the others by this time."<sup>1</sup> Likewise the fifth point really goes back to the third: Maitland claims that the supposed fulfilments of the predictions of the seals and trumpets and so on are, in fact, not appealed to in works designed to convert the infidel. Sixth, is it sensible to declare that Antichrist already has his persecuting hands on the saints? Some do not seem to realize their enthrallment; why not? The implication is that we are dealing with nonsense. Maitland grimly remarks, "I imagine that whenever the 'saints' shall be actually in the hands of the Little Horn, they will be in no doubt whether they are there or not."<sup>2</sup> Anyway, by the test of Scripture the Pope is not the appalling and wilful blasphemer described in the Antichrist prophecies:

"I have no wish to defend the foolish, blasphemous, and idolatrous impieties of Popery, but I must maintain that in this, as well as in other points, it either falls short, or does not agree, in kind and quality, with what we are led to expect from the Little Horn, whose blasphemy seems (if such a thing can be described in words) to be downright barefaced infidelity - something more like what was exhibited in France during the Revolution, than like any thing that has ever been seen in the Church of Rome. 'He is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.' The Church of Rome has not denied either; and if the open profession of faith in the Father and the Son, as very God, in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal, be the characteristic point, I shall be glad to be shewn any protestant church out of Great Britain and Ireland, so free from apostacy as the Church of Rome." <sup>3</sup>

Neither is the Papacy the "apostate power" that "shall forbid to marry".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 86-7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

"Those who have any acquaintance", says Maitland, "with the real doctrines of apostates from Christianity, (whether French philosophers, German illuminati, or liberal infidels of England), will require no proof that such a law may be expected, if an infidel apostacy should become dominant."<sup>1</sup> But why pick so incessantly on Rome ? The historicist school is strangely silent about the Eastern Church, though it shares many an error with the Papal one. Maitland jibes, "We have already got a Western apostacy in Popery, and an Eastern apostacy in Mohammedanism, and to get another would spoil all."<sup>2</sup>

It was with regard to this question of whether the Papacy were indeed apostate that Maitland did some memorable execution as a researcher in history. Bishop Hurd, for one, fell to him; and the manner thereof is a classic revelation of Maitland's search for historical truth, and it also foreshadows the way in which from 1832 he was to mince the Church History of Joseph Milner. Avowing, like Milner, that he had examined original sources, Hurd had cited St. Bernard of Clairvaux as claiming that "the Beast of the Apocalypse had seated himself in St. Peter's chair."<sup>3</sup> Hurd quoted, "Bestia illa de Apocalypsi, cui datum est os loquens blasphemias, et bellum gerere cum sanctis, PETRI CATHEDRAM OCCUPAT, tanquam leo paratus ad praedam."<sup>4</sup> Maitland comments,

"These are indeed the words of Bernard; but it seems impossible to suppose, that Bishop Hurd was ignorant that by the 'apocalyptic beast,' St. Bernard meant, not the POPE, but the ANTIPOPE; and by the 'saints' with whom he made war, the POPE and his adherents. In fact, that the 'LEO paratus ad praedam' was Peter Leo who, having usurped the pontifical chair, under the title of Anacletus II, had drive Innocent II. from Rome."<sup>5</sup>

A final example, from the Second Enquiry, will give some

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 120-1.

<sup>3</sup> First Enquiry (1826), p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 71-2.

idea of how Maitland's impact must have been so much greater than William Witherby's through his sheer power of argument. It concerns his demolition of the old historicist contention that the 1,260 days must be taken to be 1,260 years because Antichrist could not attain to world supremacy in  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, or 1,260 literal days. In his First Enquiry Maitland had already cited recent history as against this assumption. When he wrote his Second Enquiry, he invalidated it in detail by a demonstration which can only be categorized as brilliant. First, he sets out the historicist case as stated by Mede. The latter had said (inter alia) that in a literal  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years it was "impossible" that "ten kingdoms" could be "founded at the same hour with the beast" - the reference is to Rev. 17 : 12 ff.<sup>1</sup> Maitland then criticizes so emphatic a denial. What Mede really meant by "impossible", he points out, was "very improbable"; and, he says, "It does indeed make all the difference in the world, whether the thing can be shewn to be impossible, or whether it is only, in the judgment of mankind, improbable."<sup>2</sup> Yet, "Is it more improbable than events which have already occurred in fulfilment of prophecy ?"<sup>3</sup> - than "that Babylon and Nineveh should be blotted out, or that no stone should remain on another in Jerusalem ?"<sup>4</sup> Suspending his belief that the Scripture adduced by Mede means, after all, literal "kings" and not, as the mystical historicist interpretation had it, "kingdoms",<sup>5</sup> Maitland proceeds to show that, even on the mystical reading, the literal interpretation of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, for which he is throughout contending, is inherently plausible; and, moreover, he does this by seizing on a passage from (of all things) a leading modern book of the opposing

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<sup>1</sup> Second Enquiry, p.7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>5</sup> As Maitland says, (ibid., p.11) the text (Rev. 17 : 12) mentions "kings", not "kingdoms".

school, James Hatley Frere's popular historicist volume A Combined View of the Prophecies of Daniel, Esdras, and St. John (1815):<sup>1</sup>

"What [Maitland asks] did Napoleon do in one year and a half? I will state it in Mr. Frere's words. 'The first day of the new year 1806 was distinguished in Germany by an event not a little singular; viz. the coronation of the Electors of Wirtemberg and Bavaria, as Kings; which dignity was further amplified by a considerable increase of territory, at the expence of the unfortunate house of Austria. Again, on the 15th of March, of the same year, Murat was invested with the Duchies of Berg, and Cleves. \*\*\*\*\* In the same year Holland was made a Kingdom, and Louis Buonaparte, a younger brother of Napoleon, was placed upon the throne. In this year Saxony was also erected into a Kingdom. We again read that, on the 31st of March, 1806, Buonaparte submitted to the Senate a variety of decrees for it's approbation: by one of them he conferred the Kingdom of Naples on his brother Joseph; by another he gave to Berthier the Principality of Neufchatel, and by another he created a number of Duchies, with suitable revenues, in Italy, to be distributed among the civil and military officers. \*\*\*\*\* The erection of the Duchy of Benevento into a fief of the French Empire, in favour of Talleyrand, with the title of Prince and Duke of Benevento, and the grant of the Duchy of Ponte Corvo to Marshal Bernadotte, by a similar tenure, followed some months after the preceding establishments. From his Imperial Camp at Finkenstein, on the other side of the Vistula, Buonaparte wrote, on the 28th May, 1807, to the Conservative Senate, that he had instituted Duchies as rewards for eminent services done him, whether military or civil; and that in pursuance of this system of encouragement he had created, by letters patent, the Marshal Le Febvre Hereditary Duke of Dantzig, &c.'" 2

Thus Maitland criticized the great paradigm. Then, developing his attack on the kind of history which had been written on paradigmatical assumptions, he fell on the standard work of the Evan elical Joseph Milner.

Everyone acquainted with the life of John Henry Newman knows that his schoolmaster Walter Mayers lent him, after his youthful

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<sup>1</sup> London.

<sup>2</sup> Second Enquiry, p. 9-10, quoting A Combined View, pp. 443-5.



conversion, some books which produced a profound impression on him. One was Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies; another was Joseph Milner's History of the Church of Christ. Of the working of the Bishop's influence, something will be said below. From Milner's volumes he first imbibed his lasting love of the Fathers. The History was a remarkable book, by a writer whose own story was likewise remarkable; and in Maitland, from 1832, it found a remarkable assailant. Milner, who was of humble parentage and delicate from infancy, attended his local grammar school (Leeds) and, through the generosity of friends, Catharine Hall, Cambridge. For many years he was the capable Head of Hull Grammar School, and from 1768 Lecturer at Holy Trinity, Hull, while for nineteen years he also served the out-of-town parish of North Ferriby, first as curate, later as vicar. In both of these cures he was able to see initial reproach from the well-to-do for his "Methodistical" tone give way to deep respect and admiration. The county Member William Wilberforce procured him the incumbency of Holy Trinity, but he died soon afterwards. The History included work by his mathematician brother Isaac. The first volume appeared in 1794, and the last edition of the book in 1847.<sup>1</sup> Widely distributed between these dates, it achieved (humanly speaking) what must be a rare record: the conversion of six M.Ps.<sup>2</sup> From the point of view of the present subject, the importance of Milner's book was this:

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<sup>1</sup> On the life of Joseph Milner (1744-97) and the complicated publishing history of his chief creation, see John Henry Overton in DNB. Overton says that vols. i-iii of the History appeared in Milner's lifetime, from 1794 to 1797; in 1800 Isaac, who had helped his brother in these three, republished the first volume in an altered version. Vol. iv came out in 1803, vol. v in 1809; both were edited by Isaac. In 1810 he re-edited the entire History. On the History itself, see J.D. Walsh, 'Joseph Milner's Evangelical Church History', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 9 (1959), 174-87.

<sup>2</sup> Walsh, op. cit., p. 174.

it incorporated and publicized a version of Church history which was the historical counterpart of the asseverations of the great Protestant paradigm. Inevitably, the criticisms the paradigm was now attracting proceeded to encompass the view of history which was so closely related to it.

Milner, who cites Mede, the Newtons, Hurd, and Hallifax as instructive expositors of the prophecies, firmly pronounces that the Papacy had become and remained Antichrist. His description of the situation as in the eighth century mixes empirical criticisms with material drawn from the parlance of the paradigmatisers:

"Superstition, for a number of centuries, had sullied her [the Church's] beauty, but had left her vitals untouched. Idolatry, at length, aided by the same superstitious propensity, prevailed to disunite her from Christ, her living head. The reigning powers, both in the east and the west, were overgrown with false worship: even those parts of the west, which as yet were not disposed to receive idolatry, were deeply prepared for the gradual admission of it, partly by the growing of superstition, and partly by the submission of all the European Churches to the domination of the Roman See. There the seat of Antichrist was firmly fixed. Rebellion against the lawful power of the magistrate, the most arrogant claims to infallibility, and the support of image-worship, conspired with the temporal dominion lately obtained by the bishop of Rome, to render him the tyrant of the Church. His dominions, indeed, were not large; but, in conjunction with the proud pretensions of his ecclesiastical character, they gave him a superlative dignity in the eyes of all Europe. It was evident that the face of the whole Church was altered: from the year 727, to about the year 2000, we have the dominion of the Beast; and the prophesying of the witnesses in sackcloth, which was to continue 1260 days, or forty and two months, that is, for 1260 years."<sup>1</sup>

So authentic Christians still existed. "We must now look for the real Church, either in distinct individual saints, who, in the midst of popery, were preserved by effectual grace in vital union with the Son

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<sup>1</sup> Church History, vol. iii, in Works of the late Rev. Joseph Milner, A.M., revised and corrected by Isaac Milner, 8 vols. (London, 1819), vol. iii, p. 170.

of God, or, in associations of true Christians, formed in different regions, which were in a state of persecution and much affliction."<sup>1</sup> One of these "associations" was the body of Paulicians; another the Cathari; the third the Waldenses. "The Waldenses", Milner claims, "are the middle link, which connects the primitive Christians and Fathers with the reformed";<sup>2</sup> this, he explains, is by reason of their evangelical doctrine and example.

Milner's treatment of the first of these groups, the Paulicians, is an illuminating example of what he had persuaded himself to believe about such witness-bodies in general. He understood that they had formed around a leader named Constantine, who dwelt near Samosata and devised "a plan of divinity from the New Testament",<sup>3</sup> paying particular heed to the writings of St. Paul. "Their enemies", Milner relates, "called them Gnostics or Manichees"; but he interprets them as having "originated from a heavenly influence, teaching and converting them"; and "in them", he continues, "we have one of those extraordinary effusions of the Divine Spirit, by which the knowledge of Christ and the practice of godliness is kept alive in the world."<sup>4</sup> Milner thinks it inconceivable that persons relishing the Pauline Epistles could really (as opponents alleged) be dualists, docetists, and rejecters of the authority of the Old Testament - which is exactly what modern scholarship has concluded they were. He goes on to describe how, under slaughterous persecution, the sect at last turned to violent rebellion "against the established government"<sup>5</sup> (not to be commended in the age of the French Revolution) and to an alliance with Muslims,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 170-1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 511.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

these declensions signifying their abandonment of vital Christianity. The Paulician divinity eventually subsided.

Almost incredibly, Milner confuses the dualistic Cathari with the Waldenses,<sup>1</sup> and describes the Albigenses (the French Cathari) as a "branch"<sup>2</sup> of the latter.

In 1832 Maitland fell upon him with his lengthy Facts and Documents illustrative of the History, Doctrine, and Rites of the Ancient Albigenses and Waldenses.<sup>3</sup> This book, the author tells us, was actually provoked by the sentiments about the two witnesses which could be read in Faber's Sacred Calendar of Prophecy; but since "many readers may possibly have no other book of reference on the subject" of ecclesiastical history "than Milner's History of the Church of Christ",<sup>4</sup> which contains (says Maitland) very bizarre statements, including historical errors and a derogation of Mosheim, Maitland therefore inquires into Milner's general authority. Needless to relate, Milner is found wanting, well-nigh appallingly so. And what he had to narrate about the witnesses is demolished, a statement which here calls only for brief illustration. On the Paulicians, Milner had used only Gibbon and Mosheim; and his discovery that the sectaries in question were the fruit of an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit is "in defiance of his two professed guides, (and, I believe, of every other ecclesiastical writer)".<sup>5</sup> Indubitably the Paulicians, like the Albigenses, were "Manicheans".<sup>6</sup> As for the Waldenses-Albigenses-Cathari medley, it is certain (pronounces Maitland) that the Albigenses and Waldenses were always two "distinct" and different sects;<sup>7</sup> it is just

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. ibid., p. 437.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 477n.

<sup>3</sup> London.

<sup>4</sup> Facts and Documents, p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

as certain that "some of the doctrines and rites of the Albigenses, were as contrary to the word of God as the worst superstitions of Popery": such dualistic sectaries were by no means "the predicted witnesses".<sup>1</sup> Lastly, "it does not appear that Waldo, and his immediate followers, contemplated a separation from the church of Rome i.e. as the witnesses would presumably have done<sup>2</sup>; but rather a revival of personal religion within its pale, and a removal of some abuses, and superstitions."<sup>2</sup> "It seems clear", Maitland continues, "from the statements, or (what is even more important) the silence, of their persecutors, and their own confessions (that is, from all the sources of information which we possess) that their opposition was not directed against some of the peculiar doctrines of the Romish church."<sup>3</sup> Maitland also feels that their "military character" was also inconsistent with "their character as witnesses, and martyrs of Christ",<sup>4</sup> who enjoined love for enemies and warned people not to take the sword.

Maitland, however, thought it necessary to repeat at a more popular level his findings about the Albigenses and Waldenses in 1839 and even as late as 1852. One of his Eight Essays on Various Subjects (1852)<sup>5</sup> is called 'The Waldenses and Albigenses'. Of its origin he writes,

"The two Parts which form the following Essay, were originally published in the British Magazine in April and May, 1839. My object was to give a superficial and popular sketch of the state of the question respecting the sects to which they refer. Something of the sort seemed to me to be then wanting; and notwithstanding the labours of some learned writers, it appears to be as much wanted now as it was then." <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. [451]

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 468.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 468-9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 474.

<sup>5</sup> London.

<sup>6</sup> Eight Essays, Essay VI (pp. [154]- 86), p. 154.

Finally, Maitland too was a premillennialist. For example, in his Attempt to elucidate the Prophecies concerning Antichrist he concludes that Christ's personal Return must precede the millennium because Christ has to slay the Man of Sin before the millennium can be inaugurated.

E. John Henry Newman

The Apologia (1864) makes it clear that Newman was at first a satisfied paradigmaticist, then a dissatisfied one, and lastly a keen and acute advocate of futurism.

We have already mentioned how Mayers had lent him certain significant books. "Simultaneously with Milner", Newman tells us, "I read Newton on the Prophecies, and in consequence became most firmly convinced that the Pope was the Antichrist predicted by Daniel, St. Paul, and St. John . My imagination was stained by the effects of this doctrine up to the year 1843; it had been obliterated from my reason and judgment at an earlier date; but the thought remained upon me as a sort of false conscience."<sup>1</sup>

It looks as if the process of obliteration may have begun as early as 1824, for writing to his sister Jemima from Oriel, on 8 March, the newly-elected Fellow requests, "Pray tell Aunt Betsy that some part of Newton on the Prophecies, his explanations for instance of the 11th of Daniel and the beginning of the Apocalypse are reckoned incorrect."<sup>2</sup> Newman's Apologia, however, selects the year 1833 as the critical one: "As regards my reason in contrast to his "imagination", I began in 1833 to form theories on the subject,

<sup>1</sup> Apologia pro Vita sua, Everyman's Library (London, 1912), p.33.

<sup>2</sup> The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman, vol. i, (1978) p. 173. The series was originally edited by C.S. Dessain and published at London (1961ff.). The volumes cited in the present chapter were each edited by Ian Ker and Thomas Gornall (Oxford, 1978-). Jemima and Mary Newman were living with Aunt Betsy when the letter quoted was written: see Meriol Trevor, Newman: the Pillar of the Cloud (London, 1962), pp. 36, 56.

which tended to obliterate it [the stain].<sup>1</sup> He then refers to the first part of Home Thoughts Abroad, composed that year: "Old Rome is still alive. The Sorceress upon the Seven Hills, in the book of Revelation, is not the Church of Rome, but Rome itself, the bad spirit, which, in its former shape, was the animating spirit of the Fourth Monarchy."<sup>2</sup>

At this rather fascinating period in the development of his eschatology, when the historicist paradigm was disintegrating in his mind, when he was shifting the malediction from the Papal Church to the city itself, and even beginning to blame the Reformation for modern secularism, Newman was still a year-day man. From Rome he writes to Pusey, on 19 March 1833, "I wish I could make up my mind whether the 1260 years of captivity [sic] begin with Constantine - it seems a remarkable coincidence that its termination should fall about on the Reformation - (I speak from memory) which, amid good, has been the source of all the infidelity, the second woe, which is now overspreading the earth."<sup>3</sup> Newman presently goes on to sketch a tentative hypothesis:

"It has struck me whether we ought not to take the main object of the Revelations (putting aside the 3 first chapters as distinct) to be that of prophesying the destiny of the Roman city and empire, without direct reference to the question whether they are Pagan or Christian, merely as secular and so ungodly. Then I would argue or investigate thus. Other cities doomed in Scripture, as Babylon, have totally perished - Rome still survives - qu then whether the prophesies [sic]

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<sup>1</sup> p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> Apologia, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> Letters and Diaries, vol. iii (1979), p. 260. Newman proceeds (*ibid.*) to explain why Constantine might be regarded as initiating the great captivity: "I see no reason to call Constantine's establishment of the Church a happy event, (except so far that good follows everything) - he was the patron of Arianism, and Constantius after him - thus the gospel was set up in heresy, and a secular spirit went with it; - as the history shows. The Church was in persecution in the reigns of Constantine, Constantius and Valens. Under Theodosius the Arians conformed to orthodoxy and corrupted the Catholics."

about the place, as a place, are yet fully accomplished ? for that Rome is meant in Rev. 17 and 18, there can be no doubt. Further Rome is expressly one of the 4 great enemies of God, the monsters of Daniel's vision - the other three have come to an end - you cannot point to the vestiges of their power; the respective seats of their empire are obliterated - but Rome still remains, tho' the worst and most ungodly of them." <sup>1</sup>

He speculates that the judgement on Rome has two stages. The first was the fall of its empire; the second will be "overwhelming and final" <sup>2</sup> a catastrophe still future. This two-stage sequence Newman attempts to justify from the structure of the Apocalypse and from the consideration that the Roman State, though partially settled by the northern peoples and by Muslim invaders, and currently threatened by Russia, "as a body, ... remains more or less entire. The Roman titles have been preserved, Caesar, Emperor, etc, and the assumptions they involve. Rome too, as a city, still claims universal obedience to its sway, even in the Eastern Empire, i.e. appointing Patriarchs etc"; <sup>3</sup> Latin is retained, the sole Roman talent (for politics) is retained, and so are its religious rites, "its polytheistic worship, etc." <sup>4</sup>

The kernel of this new hypothesis was communicated to Jemima the next day: the city of Rome is under a curse; dreadful judgements must yet come; but the Church will be freed thereby from captivity. On 14 April Newman again brought up the subject in a letter to Samuel Rickards; he reported what might appear to be literary confirmation of his view, and from Roman sources, no less:

"When I had formed it, I was surprised to find several confirmations of it in a book of Roman Antiquities I happened to take up. Gregory the Great seems to have held the notion (3 centuries after Rome became Christian) that still the spot was accursed. ... An Irish Bishop

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



of the 11 (?) century states the same doctrine in a so-called prophecy which remains of the series of Popes to their termination.<sup>1</sup> With the authenticity of this document I am not concerned, much less with its inspired character ... it is sufficient it was produced A.D. 1600 about, in order to secure the election of a particular Pope. Thus its doctrine evidently has been acknowledged by a considerable party in the Church, and as a tradition has a sort of authority of the opinion of the Church - ... he says 'Then shall She that sitteth upon the 7 hills be destroyed, when the Lord comes to judge the earth etc' - You will observe this document is written by an upholder of the Romish Supremacy, who thus makes the city and state still accursed, tho' God's Church be there."<sup>2</sup>

Were it not for a feeling that the author was perhaps not far from a mild attack of Angst, and were we not in the serious business of historical analysis, we should be tempted to laugh. This enthusiastic hypothesizing of his fumes up, of course, from an interesting historical cauldron. Bubbling together in Newman's brains are the still potent dregs of Bishop Newton's particular distillation of Mede's old paradigm; the daring anti-Reformation animus<sup>5</sup> of Hurrell Froude; the author's fear of, and hostility towards, rationalism and secularism; and a worried zeal to exculpate the old national enemy, the Papal Church.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that what finally drew Newman to futurism and out of the pull of the historicists' influence was the allure of, and his deference to, the Fathers. As a youth he had discovered them in Milner; he later sought out copies of them; he and Keble and Pusey edited them; and, just over two years from the date of the letter to Rickards, he preached some eschatological discourses virtually based on them, namely the Advent sermons of 1835, which appeared in print in 1838 as Tract 83.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Newman's reference is to the Prophecies of Malachy, a document of (apparently) 1590, attributed to, but actually unconnected with, St. Malachy (1094-1148), archbishop of Armagh.

<sup>2</sup> Letters and Diaries, vol. iii, pp. 287-8.

<sup>3</sup> Later called 'The Patristical Idea of Antichrist' in Newman's Discussions and Arguments (London, 1872), pp. 44-108. Numerous revisions in language are noticeable in the 1872 edn.

In Sermon I, "The Times of Antichrist", Newman says, "At this season of the year ... when we turn our thoughts to the coming of CHRIST, it is not out of place to review the intimations given us in Scripture concerning His precursor: this I shall now do in several Sermons; and, in doing so, I shall follow the exclusive guidance of the ancient Fathers of the Church."<sup>1</sup> For,

"though the Fathers do not convey to us the interpretation of prophecy with the same certainty as they convey doctrine, yet in proportion to their agreement, their personal character, and the general reception at the time, or the authority of the sources of the opinions they are stating, they are to be read with deference; for, to say the least, they are as likely to be right as commentators now; in some respects more so, because the interpretation of prophecy has become in these times a matter of controversy and party."<sup>2</sup>

Futurism is fundamental to these four persuasively-argued, delicate, and moving addresses. In the first, it is argued that Antichrist has not yet come. "A certain frightful apostasy"<sup>3</sup> and Antichrist's tyranny are still not apparent; the "time of unexampled trouble"<sup>4</sup> has not arrived; the Gospel has not yet been preached "throughout the world".<sup>5</sup> To the objection that Paul had declared, so long ago, that the mystery of iniquity was already working, Newman replies that the apostle apparently meant "that in his day there were shadows and forebodings, earnestings, and operating elements of that which was one day to come in its fulness. Just as the types of CHRIST went before CHRIST, so the shadows of Antichrist precede him."<sup>6</sup> Enlarging upon this theme in a magnificent passage stigmatized by J.H. Todd as belonging more to

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<sup>1</sup> 'Advent Sermons on Antichrist', No. 38 of Tracts for the Times, 6 vols. (London, 1833-42), vol. v. (1840), pp. 11-54 (11).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

poetry than theology (which perhaps it does, though the "sacramentalism" is wonderful and the psychology splendid stuff for the Church Militant), he proclaims, "In truth, every event in this world is a type of those that follow, history proceeding forward as a circle ever enlarging. The days of the Apostles typified the last days: there were false Christs and troubles, and the true CHRIST came in judgment to destroy the Jewish Church. In like manner every age presents its own picture of those future events, which alone are the real fulfilment of the prophecy which stands at the head of all of them."<sup>1</sup>

But surely, runs another objection, since the power that "letteth" was early identified as the Roman Empire, and that empire has long disappeared, then Antichrist must already have come? "Far from it", answers Newman, "the Roman empire remains even to this day";<sup>2</sup> the ten kingdoms into which the Empire was divided, live on. Even now, "as in the days of our fathers, a fierce and lawless principle" - "a spirit of rebellion against GOD and man"<sup>3</sup> - is indubitably abroad, but the Empire's legatee-kingdoms are managing, though only just, to hold it down, as the French spirit had had to be contained in the age of the Revolution.

Antichrist, says Newman, will be an individual, whose types have already been seen in history: Newman names Antiochus Epiphanes, Julian the Apostate, and "Mahomet". The irreligiousness of the present-day world, continues Newman, suggests that the final apostasy is preparing. Let not his hearers be seduced by Satan's wiles. The prince of evil will not naively ask you outright to be a recruit against

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

the truth: he will use plausible inducements. His seductive talk is (if one may now say so) initially Whig-Utilitarian, leading up to the openly theological. "He promises you civil liberty; he promises you equality; he promises you trade and wealth; he promises you a remission of taxes; he promises you reform. ... He shows you how to become as gods."<sup>1</sup>

Antichrist's great mark, Newman explains in the second sermon, "The Religion of Antichrist", is open infidelity. (The echoes of William Jones, Bishop Horsley, and G.S. Faber sound here, and will soon sound again.) He will be a Jew, and he will sit in a literal temple at Jerusalem. He will honour some strange deity, obscurely described in Dan. 11 : 38-39. As for the curious paradox that he will thus be both anti-religious and religious, let it be illustrated from "the history of the last fifty years".<sup>2</sup> In France, explicit atheism had been accompanied by worship. The impious, atheistic revolutionaries had decreed that Liberty and Equality must be worshipped; "they appointed festivals besides in honour of Reason, the Country, the Constitution, and the Virtues";<sup>3</sup> dead men, including notable infidels, were canonized. Withal, as if to show the persistence of the Roman Empire, Ceres was worshipped. Indeed, another patristic speculation was that the Empire would revive at the End-time; and Hippolytus had worked out that Antichrist would be its restorer.

In the third sermon, "The City of Antichrist", the ghost of the genius loci idea walks for a while. Speaking of the church in the city of Rome, Newman says, "That part of the Christian Church, (alas !) has in process of time become infected with the sins of Rome itself,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 13-14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 20-1 .

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

and learned to be ambitious and cruel after the fashion of those who possessed the place aforesaid."<sup>1</sup> But reservations follow. "Yet if it were what some would make it, if it were as reprobate as heathen Rome itself, what stays the judgment long ago begun?"<sup>2</sup> Well, perhaps divine mercy will lift it; again, perhaps the city marked out for destruction is not Rome at all, but some other city - even the whole reprobate world, possibly - of which Rome is named as a type.

Sermon IV is entitled "The Persecution of Antichrist". Antichrist's future persecution of true religion, the fourth sermon states, will be the worst ever, though it may not be bloody, "but of craft and subtilty only",<sup>3</sup> and during it "all religious worship"<sup>4</sup> will cease. We know not when these things will happen, but from time to time ominous signs occur. One is "the approaching destruction of the Mahometan power. This ... may outlive our day; still it tends visibly to annihilation, and as it crumbles, perchance the sands of the world's life are running out."<sup>5</sup>

In 1840 Newman wrote a long essay, later called 'The Protestant Idea of Antichrist', on Todd's Discourses on the Prophecies relating to Antichrist in the Writings of Daniel and St. Paul.<sup>6</sup> Todd he considered scientific and dispassionate, in his exegesis, though somewhat negative - "rather bent on disproving what others advance than in establishing, according to the sense of the Catholic Church, any thing positive and substantial instead".<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 37-8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 51-2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>6</sup> Art. V, Discourses on the Prophecies relating to Antichrist in the Writings of Daniel and St. Paul, by James Henthorn Todd, British Critic, 28 (1840), 391-440. It shows Maitland's influence, and he is named in places, e.g. p. 400. Amended somewhat, Newman's essay reappeared as 'The Protestant Idea of Antichrist' in his Essays Critical and Historical, 2 vols. (London, 1871), vol. ii, pp. 112-85.

<sup>7</sup> 'J. H. Todd's Discourses', Brit. Critic, ibid., p. 391.

Moreover, "An adversary would impute to his discussions some deficiency of poetry."<sup>1</sup> Todd, as we have seen, thought that poetry was precisely what the author of Tract 83 had improperly strayed into. However, Newman says, "We have pleasure in believing that in matters of doctrine we entirely agree with Dr. Todd."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Newman is grateful to Todd, since the Irish scholar's critique of historicism, while it removes the absurd stigma of being Antichrist from the Church of Rome, clears the Church of England too, she herself having long been dubbed "Antichrist" by Puritan fanatics. Newman re-emphasizes the point about Rome: "Either", he says, "the Church of Rome is the house of God or the house of Satan; there is no medium."<sup>3</sup> He then offers "some collateral considerations"<sup>4</sup> on Todd's subject. For our present purposes, his onslaught on the eighteenth-century Church historicists is probably the most important of them. With his usual dislike for that century, he disparages (with what the next-named gentlemen would have regretted as fanatical "enthusiasm" and decidedly bad manners) the memories of (apparently) Bishops Newton and Warburton. If the thought that the Papacy was Antichrist had been systematized (as Todd claimed) out of the slogans of the Albigenses, Waldenses, and Spiritual Franciscans,

"We do not see what good could come to theology from the Manichees or the Fratricelli of the middle ages; no, nor in later times from the attendants on Walpole or Pelham, or frequenters of the back stairs at St. James's. Mere decency of life is not a candle bright enough to read withal holy apostles or the man greatly beloved; and much more when the matter taken in hand, is no less than that of unchurching the greater part of Christendom. A man must be almost an angel to stand forth to teach us that the great multitude of Christian bishops are children of the devil."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 393.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 406.

It is in the course of this review of Todd's book that Newman refers also to William Burgh's "Sermon on Antichrist" as "excellent".<sup>1</sup> We turn now to Todd and Burgh successively.

F. James Henthorn Todd

It can be held that Maitland was the most combative of the new futurist school, Newman the most poetic, and Todd the one who came nearest to writing a summa. Todd's eloquence is greyish rather than scintillating, his style lucid, but not always elegant to the last degree; his learning, nevertheless, is vast, his reasoning close, his attention to the texts superbly rigorous. With him futurist exegesis academically came of age, just before the new biblical criticism knocked the literalist bottom out of it.

Todd, who was born in 1805 and died in 1869, was from 1849 Regius Professor of Hebrew at Trinity College, Dublin. He was a dedicated scholar, not only in his professed field, but in Irish antiquities as well. He was also conscious of the need to educate more deeply the Irish Church, in which he was a priest.<sup>2</sup> A supporter of Tractarianism, he was one of a band (Hook, Moberly, Perceval, and Palmer of Worcester College) who sent "most kind letters of approval and concurrence" to Newman after the publication of Tract 90.<sup>3</sup> Todd's Donnellan Lectures of 1838 were published two years later as Discourses on the Prophecies relating to Antichrist in the Writings of Daniel and St. Paul.<sup>4</sup> A supplementary volume, the Donnellan Lectures for 1841, did not appear until 1846; it was entitled Six Discourses on the Prophecies relating to Antichrist in the Apocalypse of St. John.<sup>5</sup>

Todd had met Maitland as early as 1833. Evidently their

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.400.

<sup>2</sup> On Todd's life and interests see Elizabeth Marion Todd in DNB.

<sup>3</sup> R.W. Church - F. Rogers, 14 March 1841, in Anne Mozley (ed.), Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman during his Life in the English Church, 2 vols. (London, 1891), vol. ii, p. 333. The words quoted are in a section separately dated 21 March.

<sup>4</sup> Dublin.  
<sup>5</sup> Dublin.

relationship was fairly close. The 1840 volume is dedicated to Maitland, of whom Todd describes himself as "the sincere and affectionate friend".<sup>1</sup> The same Dedication speaks of "the great value of" Maitland's "writings in the interpretation of prophecy", and it acknowledges "the assistance derived from them in the composition of the following pages".<sup>2</sup> Todd manifestly carries forward Maitland's work. The year-day system, for example, is described by Todd as an "untenable assumption",<sup>3</sup> "an assumption, which an eminent living writer [Maitland, of course] has so completely refuted, that no theory built upon it can now be considered as requiring any further confutation".<sup>4</sup> Again, Maitland's exposure of Bishop Hurd's misinterpretation (to say the least) of the famous utterance of St. Bernard is also adopted. Moreover, Todd quotes the Second Enquiry to stress that the real Antichrist's identity will be made obvious to the Church. Further, he observes, with respect to the eschatological roles with which the Waldenses and Albigenses had been invested, that G.S. Faber "has not ventured to grapple with the 'Facts and Documents', laid before the public some years ago by Mr. Maitland."<sup>5</sup> We may add that he reproduces Maitland's academic witticism about the search for the names of the ten kingdoms into which the historicists held that Rome had split: "There is much force in Mr. Maitland's remark, 'Let the reader only look at the various lists which have been made by learned men, and I think he will have no doubt that if the number mentioned by Daniel had been nine or eleven, the right number would have been found among these petty kingdoms, whose unsettled state renders it so easy to enumerate them variously.'"<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Discourses on the Prophecies, dedication-page.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-20.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 419-20.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 75n.



Todd's lectures also illustrate a tendency (again, Maitland shares it) to throw the fourth Danielic kingdom into the future. The old confidence in the succession favoured by historicists - Babylon, Greece, Medo-Persia, Rome - was giving way under the impact of the more rigorous, more literalistic, examination of the texts. Maitland, in his treatise of 1831, An Attempt to Elucidate the Prophecies concerning Antichrist,<sup>1</sup> confessed that he could not answer Lacunza's arguments unsticking the accepted labels on the last three kingdoms portrayed in the vision of the colossus; and he too concluded that the last could not be Rome. One reason was that the last kingdom was to exist just before the consummation, whereas "the Roman empire has long ceased to exist."<sup>2</sup> Todd's denial that Rome is this kingdom is emphatic. The four empires, according to a close reading of Daniel, must co-exist in time (the image shatters all at once, not one part after the other; the beasts were judged together); and, again, the fearful activities of the fourth beast are un-Roman. "The Romans", says Todd, "were remarkable for moderation, for toleration, and for gentle government of the nations that submitted to their sway. ... Not the extermination of the conquered, but their civilization, and incorporation into the Roman name, was the ultimate end of Roman government."<sup>3</sup> And Rome's sovereignty has vanished. "To the reader of history no fact seems better attested or more certain than that the Roman monarchy is extinct."<sup>4</sup> Todd condemns the reverse assumption found in Tract 83:

"The reader will see that this author has felt himself bound to follow as if it were a tradition of Apostolic origin, the ancient opinion that the Roman empire is that which withholdeth; and in order to retain this opinion as nearly

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<sup>1</sup> London.

<sup>2</sup> An Attempt to Elucidate the Prophecies concerning Antichrist, p.6.

<sup>3</sup> Discourses on the Prophecies, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

as it can be now retained, when the Roman empire no longer exists, he is compelled to speak of 'government, so far as it is the representative of Roman power', and of 'countries prophetically Roman'. I confess myself unable to understand this language; I do not see that the present governments of Europe are in any tolerable sense 'representatives of Roman power', nor do I know what is meant by 'countries prophetically Roman'; prophecy makes no mention, so far as I know, of Roman countries; and therefore I can only understand this phrase as denoting countries which expositors of prophecy, (not prophecy itself,) have found it necessary, for the support of their systems, to consider as Roman."<sup>1</sup>

This mysterious fourth empire, then, must be future. Withal, Todd is "greatly inclined to believe, that the kings of Media and Persia", foretold in the vision of the ram and the he-goat, whose little horn represents Antichrist, "are yet to come. That those countries, once the seat of such mighty empires, are destined once more to recover their long lost power, and that in them shall be enacted the last great and fearful struggle between the prince of this world and the armies of the living God."<sup>2</sup> According to Todd's exegesis, Antichrist, who is also the wilful king and the Man of Sin, will "sit literally in the Temple of the Jews at Jerusalem".<sup>3</sup> The saints he will wear out in a persecution of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years will be Jews. There will be a literal kingdom of Christ on earth.

It need hardly be said that Todd will not concede that the Roman Church is Antichrist. Rome is a true Church; "with all her deep corruptions, [she] still maintains and inculcates the great essential truths of our religion";<sup>4</sup> and "the great divines"<sup>5</sup> of the Church of England have always recognized that these things are so. In a footnote Todd supports his case by quotations from Bishop Hall, Archbishop Bramhall, Chillingworth, and Bishop Burnet. He adds, "It will be

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 256n. Todd makes it clear that he cannot identify the withholding power.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 128-9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 219-20.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 347n.

seen that the foregoing quotations are not all taken from divines of the same school; and I need scarcely observe, that it would be easy to add to their number to almost any extent."<sup>1</sup> Earlier, in an epigraph, Todd had quoted Hooker too: "Forasmuch therefore, as it may be said of the Church of Rome, she hath yet a little strength, she doth not directly deny the foundation of Christianity: I may, I trust without offence, persuade myself, that thousands of our fathers in former times, living and dying within her walls, have found mercy at the hands of God."<sup>2</sup> "The apostacy, which is foretold in Holy Writ", says Todd, "will, I am persuaded, be a system far more deeply inimical to all true religion, even than these deep corruptions [of Rome]."<sup>3</sup>

G. William Burgh

We have already met William Burgh (1801-66) as a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, who possibly influenced Maitland towards futurism.<sup>4</sup>

In the Preface to his Lectures on the Second Advent (1832),<sup>5</sup> which, Burgh tells us, "are in substance the same as a course of Twelve Lectures given in Dublin, in the winter of 1830-1",<sup>6</sup> this grave writer includes a significant fragment of intellectual autobiography. He was involved, he relates, in the stirrings of a new interest in the personal return and reign of Christ, an interest which, as the succeeding chapter will show, was common to the eschatology of both futurists and historicist evangelicals alike:

"I may mention, that it is upwards of twelve years since my attention was turned to the subject of the Lord's Second Advent, and my mind convinced of one doctrine

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 349n.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. [190].

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>4</sup> Burgh took his M.A. (1847), B.D. (1851), and D.D. (1857). See J.H. Todd (ed.), Catalogue of Graduates who have Proceeded to Degrees in the University of Dublin, p. 77.

<sup>5</sup> Dublin.

<sup>6</sup> p. [111].

which holds a prominent place in these Lectures - The personal reign of Christ. At that time this expectation was but beginning to revive in the Church, so much so that with the exception of 'the Letters of Basilicus'<sup>1</sup> (first published in the Jewish Expositor,) there was no publication on the subject in these countries. This fact emboldened me to print anonymously in 1821, 'A Discourse on the COMING OF THE DAY OF GOD, in connexion with the First Resurrection, - the reign of Christ on earth - the restitution of all things, &c.' from 2 Pet. iii. 11-13, which, while I am conscious of its very great imperfections, I am yet happy to know served, in not a few instances, to awaken attention, and lead to an enquiry that has ended in a greatly extended information, and on some points, as in my own case, to a corrected judgment."<sup>2</sup>

Burgh then goes on to say, "I very soon after was convinced from the examination of Scripture of another expectation which is prominent in the following pages - The revelation of a personal Antichrist before the Lord's coming; and of the necessity of admitting many prophecies to be yet unfulfilled, and in the prospect of fulfillment to be more literal than expositors have represented."<sup>3</sup>

The slowness of contemporary exegetes to recognize "this last most important truth" had led him to deliver the lectures,<sup>4</sup> though since they went to press he had been gratified to receive "at the hand of a friend"<sup>5</sup> Maitland's Attempt to Elucidate the Prophecies concerning Antichrist (1830). Like all the Maitland works he had seen, its fault was its brevity.

Burgh sees, like Maitland, no steady expansion of Christianity bringing about a millennial situation; rather does he contend, from

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<sup>1</sup> The work of Lewis Way, and to be discussed in Chapter V below.

<sup>2</sup> Lectures on the Second Advent, Preface, pp. iv-v. If Burgh were an historicist in 1821, he was nevertheless already on the road to a thorough literalism. His Discourse reveals that he had struggled to read Scripture without his old scheme of interpretation (1821 edn., Preface, pp. 3-4), which seems to have been a figurative one (*ibid.*, Preface, p. 4, with pp. 21-22), presumably non-literalist post-millennialism (*ibid.*, pp. 15, 21). Burgh's references (*ibid.*, Preface, p. 4) to clergymen and laity who expressed agreement with his new position, and to his Discourse as not originally intended for publication, suggest that it may have begun life as a paper for a private discussion-circle.

<sup>3</sup> Lectures on the Second Advent, Preface, p.v.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface, p. vi.

"the uniform analogy of Scripture history" and "the express word of prophecy",<sup>1</sup> that apostasy will grow to a climax, and then judgment fall. The Man of Sin will be an individual, not the Papacy. "Now I do not wish to extenuate in the least the awful wickedness of the pretensions of the Pope: but yet I do think that candour and a love of Truth will concede that this description [in 2 Thess. 2 : 4] out-does them at their highest."<sup>2</sup> The Jews will return, but commit "greater abominations than ever heretofore".<sup>3</sup> Their false security will be shattered by "'the northern army' threatened",<sup>4</sup> and they will be redispersed. After  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years God will defeat the Antichristian forces - Christ returning premillennially - and then Israel will be restored. The millennium will be a process: Christ, reigning with his glorified<sup>servants</sup>, will make it a period of conversion and edification, so that he may present the Kingdom to the Father.

Burgh persistently holds that Rome (pace Maitland in 1830 and Todd in 1840) will be the fourth kingdom. Antichrist will revive her. To do so would hardly be a far-fetched project. Burgh had "sometimes thought"<sup>5</sup> the idea had occurred to Napoleon. "It is an interesting fact", he explains, "that when the only son of Napoleon Bonaparte was born, we are told his father threw open the doors of the room in which the infant had first seen the day, and presenting himself to the crowd of ministers and nobles who were expecting the news of its birth, said - 'A king is born to Rome.'"<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Burgh seems to be quoting Joel 2 : 20.

<sup>5</sup> William Burgh, The Apocalypse Unfulfilled, or An Exposition of the Book of Revelation, 2nd. edn. (Dublin, 1833), p. 185.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

H. Joseph Tyso

Since Froom reported that he lacked biographical data about Tyso, it is as well to record that the Baptist Manual of 1853 furnishes a connected account of his life.<sup>1</sup> Born in 1774 at Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, he received believer's baptism at Colchester in 1798; and on the church's recommendation he was admitted to Bristol Academy the next year. He left Bristol in 1803, and held pastorates at Helston, Watchet, and Wallingford. In January 1848 he resigned the Wallingford pastorate on grounds of impaired health; and he died on 30 November 1852. He had ministered at Wallingford for nearly 30 years. From the Berkshire Record Office<sup>2</sup> I also learn that Tyso's name appears in the Wallingford poor rate books from 1828 to c. 1852, that he was a burgess with the Parliamentary franchise, and that the registers of his Thames Street Chapel, 1794-1837, are in the Public Record Office.

Like so many writers on prophecy, Tyso says much about the eschatological significance of the anticipated return of the Jews to Palestine; there is his 1831 book, written while he was still an historicist, An Inquiry after Prophetic Truth relative to the Restoration of the Jews and the Millennium.<sup>3</sup> He tells us, in a manner somewhat reminiscent of William Burgh, that the context of his research was the revival of the notion of a personal reign of Christ on earth. Tyso says, "A few years ago, when there began to be much said and written about the personal reign of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead saints at his coming, I felt desirous to know the truth respecting these things: therefore, with earnest prayer for divine direction and illumination, I

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<sup>1</sup> The Committee of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, A Manual of the Baptist Denomination for the Year 1853 (London, 1853), pp. 48-9.

<sup>2</sup> In litt.

<sup>3</sup> London.

began to search the Scriptures, in order to ascertain whether these things were so."<sup>1</sup> He found the return of the Jews an evident theme of unfulfilled prophecy; but he also found that, contrary to his own inclinations, he had further to accept "the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, the offering of sacrifice, and the yearly observance of the feast of tabernacles. Zech. xiv. 16".<sup>2</sup> Likewise, he became convinced, again in spite of his presuppositions, that the New Testament taught that there would be a personal reign of Christ on earth during a millennium also characterized by the resurrection of the saints to live again on earth. And what he learnt of the Fathers, from other writers, was consistent with these last two thoughts, though with Tyso in 1831 we are not moving in the circles of Maitland, Newman, and Todd, where the Fathers were authoritative; instead, Tyso informs us, "The fathers, however, were fallible men, and their writings are not a standard for the Christian church. 'We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed, as unto a light which shineth in a dark place.'"<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the mere fact that this Protestant Dissenter felt obliged to mention the apparent concurrence of the patristic testimony with his own results was in itself a sign of the times, when the Fathers' prestige was growing again. Another such sign was Tyso's tendency to interpret the prophecies literally. "The literal key", he says, "is that which has hitherto opened the treasures of prophetic truth, as the facts recorded in the New Testament abundantly testify. The mystic key is a false key, made to fit every thing, but really fits nothing well, and, like other false keys,

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<sup>1</sup> An Inquiry after Prophetic Truth, Preface, p. [3]

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Preface, p.5.

instead of opening, spoils the lock, so that those who would possess the sacred treasures are hindered."<sup>1</sup> His rule is, "Every passage of God's word should be interpreted literally, unless there is a necessity to the contrary."<sup>2</sup> The great anomaly is that Tyso still assumes that 1,260 days mean 1,260 years, ~~except as we shall presently notice~~. For Tyso, that 1,260 years probably began in 606.<sup>3</sup>

Thoughtful Jews, Tyso suggests, will soon pay attention to Scripture and repent, though stop short of conversion. God will assist their return to Palestine by miracles: thus the Nile and Euphrates will dry for their passage, and the Holy Land become remarkably fruitful. Other nations will also assist these Jews. The Temple will be rebuilt to Ezekiel's specifications, which were intended (argues Tyso) to apply to this eschatological project. Then a vast, hostile combination, Antichrist and his allies, will assemble against them:

"Though most of the nations of the Gentiles will contribute to the restoration of the Jews, yet, when they are settled in their own land, exceedingly prosperous, and, dwelling safely, (Ezek. xxxviii. 8, 11, 14.) the Turks, Russians, Persians, Egyptians, and especially the papacy, which has always considered the Holy Land as its sole right, and has shed the blood of hundreds of thousands in support of its claim; these and other nations will envy the Jews the possession of such a flourishing country. And fearing lest the restored tribes should become more prosperous and powerful than themselves, (and probably dreading a just retribution for their past cruelties,) will enter into an alliance and confederacy, in order to regain their country, and take them captive again, if not utterly extirpate them from the earth.

This mighty alliance will be under the command of a general who is in scripture called 'Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal', evidently some great northern power, probably Russia."<sup>4</sup>

"May the Lord preserve Great Britain", Tyso prays, in a footnote, "from joining the alliance."<sup>5</sup> Before the Parousia, there will be

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 94n.



"great revolutions in the kingdoms of the earth".<sup>1</sup> "Every nation", he claims, "must reform or perish. All the evils established by law or custom must be removed, both in Church and State."<sup>2</sup> Kings must rule justly; all established churches must be disestablished; the Bible must be recognized as "the only code of laws binding on the church of Christ";<sup>3</sup> and there must be freedom of worship for all. Look, the French, the Poles, the Belgians, have all revolted "since the above page was penned".<sup>4</sup> Nations failing to reform will "drink of the cup of divine wrath which is ready to be poured out".<sup>5</sup> Immediately prior to the Second Advent, sin and faithlessness will prevail. The anti-christian host will be collected at Armageddon; the two witnesses will be slain (a touch of futurism here); but "this triumph" of the forces opposed to Christ "will be only three years and a half before their signal defeat"<sup>6</sup> when Christ is manifested and establishes his Kingdom.

~~Tyso makes other interesting points - an effusion of the Spirit will eventually convert the Jews; sacrifice will be restored; may the British monarchy not be a dish in the great supper of the "flesh of kings" who will be Antichrist's confederates ! - but an important fact which calls for comment in any analysis of Tyso's drift to literalism is this curious interval of 1260 days before the end of the 1260 years. Unfortunately, the Tyso of 1831 is not a writer who names many others, but he claims to have read extensively among exegetes, and it looks as if he may be indebted here, directly or —~~

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 125n.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

~~indirectly, to Bengel, possibly via John Wesley or Thomas Witherby.~~

Bengel, as we have seen, believed that Antichrist, in the form of the Papacy, had been active in medieval times: in this sense he was an historicist. Nevertheless, as we also saw, Bengel postulated that Antichrist would re-emerge from quiescence and rage fearfully for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years in the future: in this sense he was a futurist.

It is at least equally possible, however, that Tyso's notion may be derived from Edward Irving. In the 'Preliminary Discourse' to his translation of Lacunza, Irving argues against the throwing of the numbers 1,260, 1,290, and 1,335 into the future, which is what Lacunza does with them, so that the future reign of Antichrist will last for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  literal years; but the Scot then goes on to say,

"I confess that upon this system he hath made out such a very strong case, derived and deduced from all the scriptures, that though he hath not shaken me in the least out of our interpretation of these numbers, he hath sometimes awakened in my mind the suspicion of a possibility, that when the time of that last great antichristian trouble shall arrive, these numbers may be found to have a literal application without prejudice, to that symbolical one which they have already had. ..."<sup>1</sup>

Irving adds that Lacunza may be correct in arguing that  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years of suffering for the Gentile Church may be accompanied by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years of

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<sup>1</sup> ~~Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra [Manuel de Lacunza y Díaz], The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty, translated from the Spanish by Edward Irving, 2 vols. (London, 1827), vol. i, p. xxx. Irving's "suspicion of a possibility" developed into the semi-futurism found in his essay called 'An Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse', Morning Watch, 5 (1832), 306-25; 6 (1833), 18-44, 262-85. The application of (say) the apocalyptic trumpets to the Papal 1,260 years had been correct, like the interpretation of the two witnesses as the Old and New Testaments. Nowadays, claims Irving, the Spirit has re-interpreted prophecy as having a further reference. The trumpets thus designate (e.g.) the removal of the British king and queen and nobles in favour of "a king of the people, to be one of Antichrist's ten supporters" (5, p. 309), and the de-Christianizing of the British Churches. The new witnesses (apparently Irvingite) use the O.T. and N.T., but prophesy for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, after which the atheistic Antichrist fully emerges and is overcome. (See, e.g., 6, pp. 308-9, 321, 323.)~~

persecution of the Jewish Church. Much more will be said, in the next chapter, about Irving and his place in the development of the great paradigm; but it is interesting to see him already in 1827 being drawn, in spite of himself, towards futurism. (He was aware of persons in this country who rejected the year-day system, and he knew of the recent First Enquiry of Maitland.<sup>1</sup>) Another interesting point is that Lacunza, like Tyso, believed in the future restoration ~~of sacrifice at the Temple and the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles.~~<sup>2</sup>

In 1838 Tyso proclaimed himself a futurist, in his Elucidation of the Prophecies.<sup>3</sup> After nearly "half a century"<sup>4</sup> of unquestioning acquiescence in historicism, though without confidence in the calculations other historicists had produced, he had given "the mystic interpretation of the prophetic numbers" "to the winds",<sup>5</sup> and he regretted having "aided the delusion"<sup>6</sup> in his former book. He supplies no account of what in particular had stimulated this development. One may guess from the evidence of An Elucidation that, for one thing, he had been impressed by the mounting calls for literal exegesis. He prints a catena of quotations of these calls from well-known historicists - Vitringa, Edward Bickersteth, Joshua W. Brooks, and (amazingly) Bishop Newton, who had written, "We should never depart from the literal sense of Scripture without absolute necessity for so doing."<sup>7</sup> (In this way, the futurist movement appears as a technical development, or

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<sup>1</sup> ~~Coming of Messiah, vol. i, pp. xxix-xxx.~~

<sup>2</sup> ~~Ibid., vol. ii, pp. 298-9, 321.~~

<sup>3</sup> London.

<sup>4</sup> Tyso, Elucidation, p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 12. It was also Bishop Newton who, as the historicist William Girdlestone remarked in 1820, had said "that the final conflict of the beast with the witnesses, their death and resurrection, may be yet to come". (Observations on the Visions of Daniel, Oxford, p. 131, where Girdlestone additionally reports that "even the enlightened [John Chapple] Woodhouse is inclined to agree with him [Newton].")

methodological evolution, from historicism.) Tyso also cites Maitland's literalist Second Enquiry and "Burgh on the Revelation" - this latter book resumably Burgh's literalist treatise The Apocalypse Unfulfilled, or An Exposition of the Book of Revelation. These writers, he says, are examples of the moderns who reject the year-day scheme as a novelty.

He seems additionally to have read William Witherby's Review of Scripture, in Testimony of the Truth of the Second Advent (1818), since he makes use of Witherby's appropriation, or misappropriation, from Woodhouse's translation of part of Rev. 1 : 1 as "must come to pass in a short time": both Witherby and Tyso take this expression as describing the duration of the history ostensibly prophesied in the Book. A final feature of Tyso's new book which suggests its genesis is its stress, heightened by tabulation, on the exegetical disagreements of historicists. This emphasis also comes out in the Preface:

"I have collected from forty-seven of the most eminent authors; [punctuation sic] the various dates they give for the commencement and termination of the important period of 1260 days, by which it will be seen no two of them fix upon the same period. ... I have also collected the various times allotted to the Seals, Trumpets and Vials, by about forty authors no two of whom have given the same dates." <sup>1</sup>

Certainly, if Maitland is the critical historian in futurism, Newman the poet, and Todd the attempter of a summa, Tyso is the movement's statistician and visual-aids man. Interestingly, in view of my speculation about possible Bengelian influence on him, a reference to Bengel occurs in Tyso's Preface: "Bengelius saw the error of this system [of reading a year for a day] a century ago, and denounced it as unscriptural yet he embraced others not more consonant with truth."<sup>2</sup> A footnote to the name "Bengelius" cites Bengel's "Introduction to his

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<sup>1</sup> Tyso, Elucidation, p. [3].

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

exposition of the Apocalypse p. 147 and 308 [in Robertson's translation] and his Gnomon on Rev. xi. 2".<sup>1</sup>

Tyso builds upon his former exegesis. The Jews will be restored, the Temple constructed, and sacrifice offered. Then the Apocalyptic beasts will appear. The first beast is "civil despotism".<sup>2</sup> The second is "ecclesiastical tyranny, as exemplified in the church of Rome, that mother of harlots. Political tyranny alone could not accomplish all its diabolical purposes without the aid of ecclesiastical tyranny."<sup>3</sup> But "immediately after the tribulation of those [eschatological] days the signs of the second advent will appear."<sup>4</sup> The Second Advent will be followed by the millennium: Tyso is still a premillennialist.

#### I. General origins of the new futurism

The emergence of futurism among non-Roman exegetes in this country was principally the result of two great influences. The first was the French Revolution, together with its prolonged military sequel; the second the dawning of a new awareness of history, an awareness which was to bestow on the nineteenth century its unprecedented measure of historical understanding. Of these two influences, the Gallic disturbance must be pronounced the major one; indeed, it speeded up the formation of the other. Both hit Mede's old construction with the same effect that the mysterious, emblematic stone had had on the colossus in the Book of Daniel.

#### J. The Revolution as paradigm

Analysis may begin with the statement that the French Revolution incorporated, to the horror of many contemporaries, an unheard-of example of a deliberate, flagrant, and vehement apostasy from

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 4n.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Christian faith and morals. A readjustment of eschatological thinking followed. Antichrist began to be identified with explicit infidelity, not Rome. Traditionally considered heretical, held to be steeped in the sins and crimes of the catalogue which John Gill attached to his commentary on the text "and that man of sin be revealed", credited with posing a sinister and standing threat to this country, but at last thrown into the shadows by the lurid display from France, Rome was now (at least by some) pronounced not guilty of apostasy as biblically defined; and therefore the Papacy was not collectively the Antichrist. Antichrist, or the developing Antichrist, was being perceived in the French Revolution. To have opened up this new theological possibility - that Antichrist was to be seen in the current rampagings of shameless infidelity - was William Jones's great exegetical achievement, and a cluster of spiritual kindred and descendants approximated to, or continued, his teaching. The notion of Antichrist as wholly or partly the Infidel One recurs in the writings of Henry Kett, Samuel Horsley, and G.S. Faber; and it is likewise a theme in both Witherbys, Maitland, Newman, and Todd. Behind the aversion to hydra-headed liberalism displayed by the last three, stands the gruesome historical model of Revolutionary France, itself widely interpreted as the construction of the deistic, atheistic, secularistic, hedonistic engineering going on in the earlier eighteenth century, and seen by the three in question as still continuing in the nineteenth and threatening to issue in the eschatological apostasy. The following catena speaks for itself:-

"For my own part, I fear that while people have busied themselves in fitting these prophecies to the Papacy, they have almost overlooked a real apostacy which, under the names of rationalism and neology, has risen to a fearful height in foreign Protestant churches, to say nothing, at present, of any other."

"Let the reader, who is in any doubt on this [above] subject, read Mr. Rose's Sermons, and the publications to which they have given rise - especially, (as that which most clearly and unanswerably shews the state of the church in Germany,) Bretschneider's Reply, translated by Mr. Evanson."<sup>1</sup> (S.R. Maitland, Second Enquiry, p. 131 and 131n., respectively.)

"That the same apostate power shall forbid to marry."<sup>2</sup>  
 - Those who have any acquaintance with the real doctrines of apostates from Christianity, (whether French philosophers, German illuminati, or liberal infidels of England), will require no proof that such a law may be expected, if an infidel apostacy should become dominant. ... They who are not 'liberal and enlightened philosophers' themselves, and who have not taken pains to see through those who are, have, I believe, very little idea of what is going on in this day, and in this country, to prepare the community for such a measure. I may say, however, that I believe three years have not elapsed, since one of our most notorious political oeconomists is reported to have publicly denounced the institution of marriage, as one of three great evils, to which the misery of mankind might be attributed." (Second Enquiry, p. 130.)

"I am persuaded that the prophecy before us [about forbidding to marry] is intended to predict a much more fatal error than that of Romanism; an error more destructive to morality and society; an error, which if we are to seek for its antitype in modern times, would seem to be represented rather by what we have seen was always the result of infidel domination, both in our own country, - during the temporary overthrow of our religion and monarchy, - and in still later times, in France, where the marriage contract was capable of being legally dissolved at any time by the mutual consent of the parties; and that infidel opinions of a similar tendency are not without their victims in our own nation, at the present day, none need be told who are acquainted with what is now commonly maintained on the subject, by the enemies of our faith and institutions." (J.H. Todd, Discourses on the Prophecies ..., p. 336.)

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<sup>1</sup> "In England in the 1820s and '30s German theology in general was regarded as dangerously blasphemous, because of the sceptical tendencies of the biblical critics" (Alan Richardson, The Bible in the Age of Science, London, 1961, p. 80n). Richardson (op.cit., loc. cit.) characterized Hugh James Rose's sermons The State of the Protestant Religion in Germany (Cambridge, 1825) as "abusive and ill-informed". Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider (1776-1848), who felt moved to respond, had in 1820 published an expansion of the arguments against accepting the Fourth Gospel as an apostolic and totally authentic portrayal of Jesus. See W.G. Kümmel, The New Testament: the History of the Investigation of its Problems, translated from the German by S. McLean Gilmour and Howard Clark Kee (London, 1970), pp. 85-6, 468-9. "Mr. Evanson" was William Alleyn Evanson, whose translation of Bretschneider's Apology for the Modern Theology of Protestant Germany appeared in 1827.

<sup>2</sup> A reference to 1 Tim. 4 : 1-3.

"There are those who expect the perfection or the indefinite improvement of man, through the cultivation of his moral, intellectual and physical capacities. ... It is hoped that enlightened reason will rid mankind of moral evil; and that the natural evils which he has hitherto suffered may be mitigated, perhaps annihilated, by science. ... 'The schoolmaster is abroad'; cheap science is provided for the multitude; and institutions for mechanics, universities for shopkeepers, and schools for infants, are supposed to be preparing a golden age, in which man will shew himself in a state of moral, intellectual, and physical maturity, such as he has never yet attained. ...

... As far as I have observed, those by whom it [this scheme of improvement] has been most zealously maintained, are avowed infidels. ... Its most striking feature is, that it is altogether irrespective of man's relation to God, and of the connexion between this world and another. It was the Devil who first pointed out the tree of knowledge to mankind, as the means by which they might become as gods; and I shall take leave to call this expected period, in which man is to be brought by the progress of science, and the march of intellect, to a happy independence of God, the Devil's Millennium." ([S.R. Maitland], Essay 9, 'The Millennium', Eruvin (London, 1831), pp. [158]-200 (pp. 159-62).)

"Its [the Church's] enemies at present are [among 6 enumerated categories] ... 2 The Utilitarians, political economists, useful knowledge people - their organs the Westminster Review, the London University, etc. ... Now you must not understand me as speaking harshly of individuals; I am speaking of bodies and principles." (J.H. Newman - his mother, 13 March 1829.<sup>1</sup>)

"Scott, I think, in his Bible lays it down distinctly that a last persecution was coming over the Christian world. He wrote this 30 or 40 years since - and it seems to have been the notion of his day. Doubtless the first French Revolution turned men's minds that way - yet that woe apparently was over - and peace restored - but the tradition continued, and now, one may suppose, is in the course of accomplishment. - This reflection leads one to look at the book of Revelations with much awe - as an oracle which could speak to us, if it chose - and which has sent out already certain brief and partially obscure, yet partially determinate sounds, to show us that it is divine." (J.H. Newman - E.B. Pusey, 19 March 1833.<sup>2</sup>)

The Utilitarians, or Philosophic Radicals, were a highly-respectable source, not only of secularistic schemes for amelioration -

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<sup>1</sup> Letters and Diaries, vol. ii, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. iii, p. 260.



which is well-known - but also of attacks on religious beliefs. There was the acute, though often tedious, polemic by Jeremy Bentham entitled Church-of-Englandism and its Catechism Examined (printed in 1817, published in 1818).<sup>1</sup> From this often inelegantly written treatise may be produced points piffling and points profound, sometimes juxtaposed. Take Bentham on baptism. "This operation was a ceremony: a ceremony, having for its object the serving to establish, and upon occasion bring to mind, the fact of a man's having been aggregated into the society formed by Jesus...

In an unlettered community, it was a sort of substitute for an entry in a register or memorandum book."<sup>2</sup> When Bentham comes to the response to the catechetical question about the inward and spiritual grace given in baptism, however, he comments, with real indignation, "Note well the sort of story that is here told. - The Almighty God, - maker of all things visible and 'invisible' - 'of heaven and earth, and all that therein is' - makes, amongst other things, a child; and no sooner has he made it, than he is 'wrath' with it for being made. He determines accordingly to consign it to a state of endless torture."<sup>3</sup> But baptism is administered, so the Deity allows the child a vague chance to escape. Again, look at how the other sacrament, the Lord's Supper, has been elevated into a ceremony to be repeated, whereas what ought to have been repeated was the washing of the feet - an example creating no privilege, but rather one of "humility"<sup>4</sup> and "condemnation".<sup>5</sup>

There is a case for affirming, in the light of such utterances, that Bentham was more truly Christian in spirit than some of his

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<sup>1</sup> London.

<sup>2</sup> Church-of-Englandism, pp. 47-8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

Christian contemporaries, rather as William Blake thought Thomas Paine more Christian than his opponent Bishop Watson of Llandaff;<sup>1</sup> and today we might muse that Bentham was seeking, in Tillich's famous expression, "the God who is above God". Nevertheless, the book was bound to be subversive.

Unhappy even those who might drop "Church-of-Englandism" and snatch for a hold in deism ! Utilitarianism had awkward questions for them too, A treatise came out at London in 1822, published by Richard Carlile (whom Newman later described as pandering to the uneducated or partly-educated urban masses hostile to the Church).<sup>2</sup> The title was Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind, and the author was given as "Philip Beauchamp", but, in fact, it was the work of George Grote, "written on the foundation of some of Bentham's manuscripts", as John Stuart Mill accurately put it.<sup>3</sup> Grote (1794-1871), banker, historian of Ancient Greece, politician, and a founder of the University of London, was extraordinarily industrious and methodical, and his book is well-organized and capably-written, not to say also logically and psychologically acute. Coming from the Bentham circle, it is, not surprisingly, occupied with the themes of usefulness and the promotion of happiness.

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<sup>1</sup> "It appears to me Now that Tom Paine is a better Christian than the Bishop." In 1798 Blake thus annotated p. 120 of Richard Watson's Apology for the Bible in a series of Letters addressed to Thomas Paine (London, 1797). See the complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. Sir Geoffrey Keynes, 4th. edn. (London, 1939), pp. 767, [750].

<sup>2</sup> In 1822 Carlile (1790-1843) was actually in Dorchester jail, to which he had been consigned in 1819 for publishing Paine's and similar works. See George Jacob Holyoake in DNB, and Newman - his mother, 13 March 1829, Letters and Diaries, vol. ii, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> The "new edn." of "Beauchamp's" Analysis (London, 1875) has an epigraphical quotation from John Stuart Mill's Autobiography, including within it the remark quoted in my text. See also George Croom Robertson on Grote in DNB, where the origin of the "Beauchamp" book is described in more detail.

The central question it asks is whether religious belief produces happiness in this life, not in odd cases, but on the whole: that is to say, whether it is useful to mankind. Again not surprisingly, the answer proffered is "No"; rather does religious belief promote misery.

"By the term religion", says "Beauchamp", "is meant the belief in the existence of an almighty Being, by whom pains and pleasures will be dispensed to mankind, during an infinite and future state of existence. And religion", he adds, "is called natural, when there exists no written and acknowledged declaration, from which an acquaintance with the will and attributes of this almighty Being may be gathered."<sup>1</sup> Natural religion, thus defined, vouchsafes no rules, no guidance, for its devotees; it is not needed for such beneficial practices as honesty and diligence. Moreover, "superhuman inducements"<sup>2</sup> are virtually useless for the enforcement of lawful behaviour in general: the implication, apparently, is that a well-organized police would do this incomparably better.

There is another point: what basically induces an individual to perform religious observances is the pressure of his companions; and this pressure is more efficient than religious receipts. To illustrate this last contention, "Beauchamp" borrows from revealed religion four precepts disobeyed through public opinion, those against duelling, fornication, simony, and perjury.

On the believing individual, says the writer, are inflicted sufferings, useless privations, undefined terrors, and the spoiling of pleasure through scruples and remorse. On others, through the influence of the wretched believer, are imposed other woes, which he,

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<sup>1</sup> "Beauchamp", Analysis (1822), p.3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

of course, shares: a twisted outlook which suggests persecution of infidels, which cripples the intellect by separating belief from experience, which brings about the rise of a class of harm-wreaking religious experts, and which fears improvements in the lot of humanity because "To counteract the course of nature, and to oppose a bar to the designs of the Deity, are in fact synonymous phrases."<sup>1</sup> (These examples do not exhaust "Beauchamp's" list.)

#### K. Willingness to hear Rome

The Articles of Religion (as G.S. Faber reminded his readers) had allowed that Rome was a true Church, and several English divines of different schools (Todd was to make a select catena of their utterances) had done the same. The futurists - it was one of their characteristic marks - showed a willingness to listen to Roman eschatologists. Thomas Witherby, with futurism in mind, asked in 1800, "As Protestants, shall we set our faces against an interpretation or an idea, because it is the idea of the Romish writers?"<sup>2</sup> He replied, "By no means."<sup>3</sup> Maitland, in the Second Enquiry, reveals a wide acquaintance with Roman eschatology. He writes of "the doctrine, which has been maintained, as far as I know, by every writer of his church (except Pastorini) from the time of St. Peter to the present hour".<sup>4</sup> As for Todd, Fromm comments adversely that his Discourses of 1840 cite so many Roman theologians and so few Protestant historicists.

#### L. Historicism in difficulties

The futurist construction had the advantage of simplicity. (In this respect, it was rather like the heliocentric paradigm in astronomy compared with the geocentric one.) Futurism had neither to

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., v. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Observations on Bicheno's book, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> p. 65.

join the continuing competition to produce the winning scheme for allocating seals, trumpets, and vials to their "fulfilments", nor to suggest a starting-date for the 1,260 years. By sticking to the biblical text and reading it as literally as possible, interpreting (say) the word "earthquake" as meaning "earthquake" and not "revolution", it avoided numerous difficulties about symbols, could plausibly claim theological merit for respecting the actual text of the Bible, and show that the historicists' agreed methodological principle was simply to set aside that text.<sup>1</sup> And what had perhaps been the biggest single difficulty in the way of interpreting "days" as literal days had conveniently been removed by recent history. We have already been shown from James Hatley Frere how in 1806 Napoleon inaugurated a long string of petty "kingdoms". Equally remarkable was the sight of the extent of French influence in 1810. Territories included in the French Empire ranged from the Electorate of Hanover in the north to the Papal States and Dalmatia in the south. The Empire had as its dependencies Spain, the Confederation of the Rhine, the Kingdoms of Italy and Naples, and the Grand Duchy of Warsaw; it had as its allies Denmark-Norway, Prussia, and the Austrian Empire. The Ottoman Empire had already been assailed; the attempt to throttle Britain by the Continental System was proceeding; and in two years' time Napoleon would strike at the Empire of Russia. As Sir Winston Churchill once commented in a twentieth-century military context, "We were evidently in the presence of new facts and of a new standard of values.... The foundations of thought were shaking."<sup>2</sup> What price now, a futurist

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<sup>1</sup> In this attention to the biblical "facts", the futurists were in line with the empirical tradition made famous philosophically by Locke and responsible for fruitful work in the physical sciences.

<sup>2</sup> Churchill's context was the receipt, early on 24 August 1914, of the news that Namur had fallen. Namur, considered a stronghold, and reinforced, had been lost in one day. See his book The World Crisis, 1911-1918, abridged and revised edn. (London, 1960, p. 171, where the quotation is also found.

could ask, the old objection that no individual Antichrist could effectively dominate the world in  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years ? Really, history had started to play the very deuce with Mede's old paradigm. The Papacy held on; the end held off.

For was the trouble confined to strict Medism. There was a threat to all historicism. In these circumstances the disturbed historicists scanned the horizon, fiddled with the prophecies, and scrutinized molehills for significance. Frere, whose prediction of the destruction of the Papal and infidel Powers had not been fulfilled, believed that Napoleon had been Antichrist. Nevertheless, Napoleon had gone, and Frere strove in vain to perceive his successor. Displaying a tendency to lean (or be pushed) in a somewhat futurist direction, he confessed his puzzlement in the Christian Herald:

"We find that the Individual who, as Antichrist, in his first manifestation, had been the principal agent in preparing these changes [i.e. Turkish decline and the presence of a revolutionary spirit in western Europe], is departed from the scene, and that there is now an entire deficiency in the Roman empire of any other individual qualified, either by personal influence or descent, to sustain the character, as anticipated alike by the ancient and modern Church." <sup>1</sup>

We leave Frere regarding the horizon. It was William Cuninghame of Lainshaw, juggling with texts and poring over the molehills of recent history, who produced what must surely be the locus classicus for these historicist aberrations; that is, the fantasy which Todd extracted from the fourth edition (1843) of Cuninghame's Dissertation on the Seals and the Trumpets. To the astounded Todd, Cuninghame seemed to have gone mad. Who, one now speculates, would not embrace literalism after a display of this murky illumination, which did not rest content with showing that the seventh trumpet has at least two

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<sup>1</sup> Letter 'On the Prophecies relating to the Infidel Individual Antichrist of the Last Days', Christian Herald, 4 (1855), 43-52 (p.52).

soundings ? "Besides these ...," reports Todd, his usual restraint finally breaking down,

"he gives in a note no less than seven 'blasts' of this trumpet (one being sounded every seven years since 1792) besides a 'second septenary of the seventh blast' /not an eighth blast/, sounded in 1841, and signifying 'Sir Robert Peel's motion of want of confidence in the Whig Ministers', the formation of Sir Robert Peel's ministry, 'the establishment of the Anglican Jerusalem Bishopric', and Bishop Alexander's 'sailing for Palestine in the Devastation steamer, December 7, 24th Chisleu'. It seems also that although the seventh blast of the trumpet is to be the last, yet there are to be septenaries of the seventh blast every seven years, until the end of time. And Mr. C. adds, 'in like manner we conceive of the former trumpets, that they are not actually sounded through the whole period of each. They are analogous to the soundings of trumpets for the onset of the armed chivalry' (pp. 124, 125). Is the author of such reveries as these, gravely proposed as expositions of prophecy, to be dealt with as perfectly sane ?" <sup>1</sup>

And always there were disagreements. Eschewing the literal meaning of the biblical text had opened the doors to admit a throng of rival interpreters armed with chronologies and lists of symbols. There were disputes about the identity of the ten toes of the colossus, disputes about apparent fulfilments of the seals, trumpets, and vials,<sup>2</sup> and (not least in importance) disputes about the nature and starting-point of the 1,260 years. 'I call upon the reader to observe', declared Maitland, "how far anything like a general agreement is carried beyond the one single assertion, that there is a certain period of 1260 years (of some sort or other - containing either 360 or 365 days), and which began at some period or other either in the fifth, sixth, seventh, or eighth centuries."<sup>3</sup>

Rather as Froom has done, the futurist Joseph Tyso, as we have seen, took to tabulating the historicists' varying results -

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<sup>1</sup> Six Discourses, p. 217n.

<sup>2</sup> Tyso thought that in omitting to give any dates for the fulfilments of the seals, trumpets, and vials, the historicists Bickersteth and Brooks acted "very prudently" (Elucidation, p. 11n.).

<sup>3</sup> Second Enquiry, p. 84.

but with an unfriendly intention.

M. The new history - and ancient Fathers

The age of European disturbances, which set in in 1789, was also the time when an awareness of the essentially dynamic nature of history was dawning, together with a wider sympathy with the past, and bringing with it a stricter concept of historical investigation. All three told against the historicist paradigm.

What may very loosely be called "the pre-1789" idea of history was that human affairs were fundamentally static. Reflecting this view, David Hume wrote, "Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover [reveal] the constant and universal principles of human nature."<sup>1</sup> In other words, history is a series of tableaux, all enacted by the same persons, who are wearing different costumes for each; and the series as a whole may serve to illustrate conclusions reached in eighteenth-century philosophy, or, as in the case of Milner's Church History, the characteristic historical and doctrinal emphases of Evangelicalism. This static notion of history could not long survive the vast changes apparent around the turn of the century: the growth of the factory system, the developments in agriculture and transport, the shifting of population, the sanguinary overthrow of the old order in France, the plunging of Europe into a protracted period of war, with the maps being torn up and redrawn, torn up and redrawn. Evidently history was not a set of tableaux, but a continually changing story; and therefore old paradigms are not necessarily applicable for ever. They had predecessors; they themselves flourished

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Alan Richardson, The story Sacred and Profane (London, 1964), pp. 101-2.



for a time because of influences which one may isolate for discussion; and, with changed circumstances, they will have successors. It is worth noting that by 1846 J.H. Todd would briefly sketch something of the varying history of the exegesis of eschatological prophecy, explaining (e.g.) that it was the rekindling of anti-Roman feeling during, and after, the reign of James II that revived "the controversial exposition of the Apocalypse".<sup>1</sup>

To this apprehension of history as a living, evolving dimension in human affairs, was added a considerable contribution from a long-developing Romanticism. There is no need to retrace here the details of what had been happening in England - how the "Gothick" had been pursued in letters and architecture; how the "monkish" times of the Middle Ages, normally a source of shudders to eighteenth-century urbanity, became in some quarters a new source of fascination. Of all people, it was Bishop Hurd who helped to influence this change of taste by defending the "Gothick" in his Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762). Periods of the past that were not "classical" began to attract interest in their own right. One important effect of this trend was the rehabilitation of the ancient Fathers of the Church. Receding fast were the great days of Scripture-sufficiency, when, as with Milton, Locke, and Samuel Clarke, the text of the Bible seemed obviously the sole datum from which Christian doctrine must be empirically derived. The case of the Scripture-sufficiency exegetes is not, indeed, totally dissimilar from that of the historicists in prophecy. Both had thrown away patristic guidance; both produced a discordant medley of results; both, it seemed to the perceptive, were becoming layed out. It was a sign of new times when in 1818

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<sup>1</sup> Six Discourses, p. 40.

Edward Hawkins or Oriel preached on the neglected subject of Tradition, arguing that Scripture must prove doctrine rather than supply it. Newman, who heard him, was permanently impressed. By 1835, when Newman preached the Advent sermons published three years later as Tract 83, his beloved Fathers are professedly made the sole guide to the interpretation of the eschatological prophecies - and they were futurists. Maitland, in 1830, directs readers of his who were curious to know what primitive teachings were with respect to the time just before the Parousia, to a handy patristic compendium "lately republished at Hatchard's".<sup>1</sup> Interest was gathering.

The reference to Maitland reminds us that the study of history began to receive a large infusion of the scientific spirit.<sup>2</sup> Imbued with this spirit, one wanted to know what had actually happened, what the facts were, what was the character of a given source, and, if confronted by manifest legends, why the legends had arisen, and how they had been sustained. Two of the greatest pioneers in this development were Friedrich August Wolf and Barthold Georg Niebuhr. Wolf's close study, in a scientific light, of the Iliad and Odyssey had led him to the conclusion, expressed in his Prolegomena ad Homerum (1795), that neither of these epics, traditionally received as the work of a great poet Homer, of whom nothing was known, was the work of any single author; instead, they had been built up from a number of separate oral compositions, the collection assuming its final, written form at a relatively late date. This thesis was by no means entirely original, yet Wolf worked it out with unprecedented thoroughness, and his book is regarded as having initiated modern critical study of the

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<sup>1</sup> An Attempt to elucidate the Prophecies concerning Antichrist, p. 19n., extending to 20n.; the quotation is in the latter.

<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that the scientific approach to history was totally new at that time. One recalls the critical studies of the Maurist scholars of the seventeenth century.

history of ancient literature. Wolf's example was not lost on Niebuhr. In his Römische Geschichte (originally published in 1811-12 and later largely rewritten) he postulated that the early history of Rome had been handed down in poetical compositions. Niebuhr also attained to the remarkable insight that the history of the rise of the Roman State from its primitive stages must be recovered through studies of its racial groups, its customs, its institutions, its political and social problems. The great History, translated in its revised form into English by Connop Thirlwall and Julius Charles Hare (1828-32), "became a text-book at the Universities".<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr's work influenced in particular Thomas Arnold, George Grote, and Henry Hart Milman. Arnold undertook a Roman history of his own, akin to his master's, which should continue the story to the coronation of Charlemagne in 800 as Holy Roman Emperor and help to popularize Niebuhr's methods and results in this country "by", Arnold says, "putting them into a form more adapted to our common taste".<sup>2</sup> The first volume of Arnold's History of Rome appeared in 1838; the third was near completion at the author's death in 1841. Five years later, Grote began to publish his History of Greece, which owed much to the ideas of Niebuhr and other Germans. There were attacks on Niebuhr's History when it came out in English, but the historian who really created a scandal was Henry Hart Milman. In his History of the Jews (1829) it was evident that the new German tendencies had reached into a work on "sacred history", a book in which miracle was treated with reservations, the Jews were studied comparatively, as Semites among other Semites, and the patriarch Abraham was categorized as a "sheik". To be sure, Maitland and the other new men who intruded upon the old line of historicist

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<sup>1</sup> G.P. Gooch, History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century, 2nd. edn. (London, 1913), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> History of Rome, 3 vols. (London, 1838-43), vol. i (1838), Preface, p. vii.

writers and dismantled the paradigm did not go on to inquire very closely into the nature and origins of the scriptural texts to which they clung like limpets. In this respect it is hard to think of Maitland as a contemporary of Ferdinand Christian Baur. But then the futurist movement was a profoundly conservative one.

It is at this point that we can indicate a link, in (say) Maitland, between apprehension of the threat of a climax of anti-christianism and the practice of the new historical scholarship which we have just been discussing. The link is historico-psychological and can be perceived by examining the arguments in 'Eschatology and History', Chapter IV of Jürgen Moltmann's Theology of Hope.<sup>1</sup>

Moltmann, who cites other German scholars in this context, quotes from H. Hempel (1957), "Since Herder the historical sense has meant reflection on imperilled order";<sup>2</sup> and he then contends that "All reflection on 'history' by historians, sociologists and philosophers of history on the continent of Europe in the nineteenth century has behind it the earthquake of the French revolution [cf. Rev. 11 : 13!]<sup>3</sup> and before it [i.e. for contemplation] the incalculable consequences of that event. In this revolution the edifice of the old institutions collapsed, and its metaphysical stabilization with it."<sup>4</sup> The crisis engendered "an awareness of the totally historic character of life as the total criticalness of man's world".<sup>5</sup> The aim of historical understanding is thus "the spiritual, political and social mastering of this continual crisis".<sup>6</sup> There will thus be attempts, Moltmann goes on, "to bring the new experiences into harmony with the traditions of the past or to rid ourselves of the burden of the past and become free for the new present".<sup>6</sup> Does not this way of looking at the rise

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from the German by James W. Leitch (London, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> Theology of Hope, p. 230n.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

of the new historical scholarship immediately clarify the case of Maitland ? Wishing to rid his times of the burden of a traditional identification of Antichrist as already present for centuries in the shape of apostate Rome, and wishing also to prepare his contemporaries to face the real Antichrist, Maitland uses the new scholarship on the sources to eradicate the bogus Antichrist and detect the future one who is presaged by an apostasy already rising behind the backs of those whose eyes are continually misapplied to the old problem of paralleling prophecies and Popes. And for Maitland, as for the conservatives whom Moltmann cites "this crisis" is "the prelude to the final battle".<sup>1</sup>

N. Irving's Lacunza.

A further anti-historicist influence must be noted. This was the publication in 1827 of Edward Irving's translation of Lacunza's La Venida del Mesias en Gloria y Magestad: The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty. Enthusiastically, Irving added it to the ferment which was producing literalism, futurism, and premillennialism. It was discussed by Maitland and Todd; it perhaps influenced Tyso; on Irving himself it made a profound impression. This exotic, catalytic book was the work of a Chilean. Manuel de Lacunza y Díaz (1731-1801) was born in Santiago and became a rather restive, though learned, Jesuit. The decree of 1767 expelling Jesuits from Spain and its overseas Empire led to his removal to Europe, where latterly he spent his days in study, especially of the Bible. La Venida, a lengthy treatise, was completed about 1791. It circulated as far as the New World, was soon in print, and was eventually placed on the Index.<sup>2</sup> The work is ostensibly the epistle of a converted Jew, Juan Josafat

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>2</sup> There is an account of Lacunza and the publishing history of his book in LeRoy Edwin Froom, The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1946-54), vol. iii (1946), pp. 303-14.

Ben-Ezra. The tedium nowadays produced by the slow pace and great bulk is not unrelieved by Lacunza's occasional sardonic humour,<sup>1</sup> his repeated attacks on what he judges the unscriptural findings of the standard Roman expositors ("the doctors"), and some genuine literary invention, like his almost Kierkegaardian "parable" (as he calls it) of "an insignificant Rabbi, deservedly reputed as amongst the lowest of his order", and living in the reign of Augustus, "a few years before the birth of Jesus Christ".<sup>2</sup> This rabbi's lengthy studies led him, says Lacunza, to expect that the Messiah would presently appear, only to be rejected by Israel, who would herself be displaced by converted Gentiles. But because the rabbi's ideas, though faithfully scriptural, "were diametrically opposed to the commonly received notions", "not a few did raise a tumult."<sup>3</sup> "The least kindly" rejected his results as coming from "one of the lowest of our scribes".<sup>4</sup> Those who were kinder and wiser, though equally inimical, "began immediately to load this insignificant author with questions, not less impertinent than ridiculous",<sup>5</sup> which no one at that time could possibly answer, such as questions about the precise nature of the new sacrifice envisaged in his literal interpretation of Malachi 1 : 11, and about what vestments the priests would wear. Nevertheless, the rabbi stuck doggedly to the Scriptures.

Like this imaginary rabbi, Lacunza is a literalist, at least against those who denied (say) that the warrior on the white horse (Rev. 19), who ends the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years' reign of Antichrist, will be Christ himself, though the text is decisive; those who denied that Christ will literally reign from David's restored throne during the future

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<sup>1</sup> There is a sardonic review of the vastly detailed teachings about Antichrist as a Jew of the tribe of Dan (Coming of Messiah, vol. i, pp. 179-81).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. ii, p. 328.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 329.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 330.

millennium; and those who denied that Israel will be literally restored, having at Jerusalem the Temple, rebuilt to Ezekiel's description, the scene of renewed sacrifice, the bloody offerings liturgically preceding the Eucharistic offering.

Whilst thus intriguing the new literalistic interpreters with unexpected support from within the Roman communion, Lacunza was also found up-to-date on the role he assigned to infidelity. Three of the beasts of Dan. 7 he itemized as Idolatry, Islam, and False Christianity; the fourth is Deism or Antichristianism. Antichrist himself, Lacunza claims, will not be a Jew of the tribe of Dan, as certain Fathers had speculated: this view was unsupported by evidence. Instead,

"According to all the signs given in the Holy Scriptures, and others, not equivocal, offered to us by time, which is wont to be the best interpreter of the prophecies, the antichrist, or the contrachrist, with whom we stand threatened in the times immediate upon the coming of the Lord, is nothing but a moral body, composed of innumerable individuals, diverse in themselves, but all morally united and animated with one common spirit, against the Lord and against his Christ; Psalm ii."<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, in totally unexpected harmony with the suspicions and fears which Protestants had come habitually to entertain about Rome, the Jesuit pronounces that the 2-horned Apocalyptic beast will be a "moral body composed of many seducers",<sup>2</sup> drawn from the ranks of the priesthood; these will persuade their flocks to apostatize and join Antichrist. The Man of Sin, a collection of apostates, will sit in the Christian Church.

It must have seemed that a man who was evidently so correct about many things was perhaps right, too, in his futurism and chronology. Even Irving felt rather drawn to Lacunza here, as we have seen. Again, Maitland had only the previous year published in support of the same view of prophetic time.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

APPENDIX 1

## THOMAS WITHERBY

## (A)

Comparatively few facts about Witherby's life come easily to hand. According to James Darling's Cyclopaedia Bibliographica (1854),<sup>1</sup> he was the brother of William Witherby, the writer on prophecy considered in Section C of the present chapter. The date of Thomas Witherby's birth is as yet unknown, like the place of his burial. His writings reveal that he was a Churchman. The publisher Antony Witherby, managing director, H.F. & G. Witherby, Ltd., 5 Plantain Place, Crosby Row, London, SE1 1YN, tells me that Thomas, who belonged to another branch of the family, was a solicitor. Presumably, then, he was the attorney entered in Browne's General Law List for the Year 1799 as of "7, Great Winchester-street, Broad-street", and further described in the same place as "vestry-clerk of St. Edmund the King, and St. Nicholas-acorns, in Cornhill and Langbourn-wards".<sup>2</sup> His prefaces of 1800 and 1804 (see my Bibliography) are dated from Enfield, and the probate copy of his Will, in the Public Record Office, gives his address as "Forty Hill in the parish of Enfield". The Will, which was executed on 21 October 1828 and calls him a "gentleman", was proved on 16 February 1831 (Prerogative Court of Canterbury). The Enfield Borough Librarian informs me (in litt.) that Witherby formerly lived at Loughton, Essex. The register of burials at Enfield does not record Witherby's; possibly he was interred at London. It is apparent that he had three daughters. His Will mentions his late daughter Matilda; Elizabeth Coltman Witherby, another, was his sole legatee and sole executrix; and, in turn, Elizabeth bequeathed premises and effects to her sister Mary Ann

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. i, p. 3242.

<sup>2</sup> 18th. edn. (London, 1799), p. 105.



Witherby. Elizabeth's Will, of which I have consulted the probate copy in the Public Record Office, was executed on 8 May 1845 and proved (Prerogative Court of Canterbury) 5 March 1853.

(B)

As a Tory Churchman, Witherby had already written a tract entitled To the Great and Learned among Christians, the humble petition of a number of poor, loyal, unlearned Christians. Together with plain questions, stated for direct and unequivocal answers, to Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F.R.S. and other<sup>the</sup> champions of what they call Reformation. The whole intended to represent these renovators to public view in their true colours, and to shew that attachment to the Christian religion, as recorded in the sacred Scriptures, is the best preservative to the peace of the State, and the welfare of mankind (London, 1793). Priestley and his ilk are challenged on scriptural inspiration, the Godhead of Jesus, the Atonement, the soul's survival and its presence with Christ, on Church government, on Satan, etc. As good citizen, the tract contends, the Christian prays about matters which may deserve governmental attention, but does not "AGITATE THE PUBLIC MIND, and sow THE SEEDS OF DISCONTENT" (p. 65). The Apocalypse shows "that it is possible for mankind to be so hardened by unbelief and all wickedness, as to be deceived by the devil to fill up the measure of their iniquities by worshipping the beast.

IT IS OUR FEAR THAT THE PRESENT AGITATION IN THE WORLD IS, AS IT WERE, THE PRELUDE TO THIS DREADFUL HARVEST OF WICKEDNESS; AND WE THEREFORE CONCLUDE WITH SAYING, BEWARE". (*ibid.*, pp. 75-6).

There are comparable political tendencies in the translation which Witherby ("T.W.") edited from the German Lutheran prelate Magnus Friedrich Roos, An Illustration of the Present Great and

Important Occurrences by the Prophetical Word of God ... (London, 1797).

Roos' preface, dated Stuttgart, 5 June 1793, says of the tracts presented in the volume, "They abuse no ruler, justify no rebellion, storm no church establishment, but are written in order to present to the reader a clear view of the prophecies of the bible which respect the present, and the times immediately following" (p. xvii).

"Supplement II" (i.e. pp. 127-36) of the Roos volume contains an account, extracted from a work by "Christopher Girtanner, Surgeon and Doctor of Physic" ( . 127), of a secret society called the Propaganda. "The Jacobines are the stirrers up of the National Assembly; ... the Propaganda are the seducers and stirrers up of the whole human race. This club existed as early as the year 1786, and the Lords Rochefoucault, Condorcet, and the Abbé Sieyes, were at the head of it" (p. 128).

## APPENDIX 2

### BISHOP HORSLEY AND FUTURISM

On the last day of 1833 the British Magazine began to publish some fugitive MSS. of Bishop Horsley. They had been sent in by his son Heneage, who explained in an accompanying letter that he felt that the Established Church was seriously threatened: "At a juncture when danger besets us on every side, when the enemy is within as well as without the camp, and at the commencement of a year, the legislative deliberations of which will probably be decisive of the fate of the church of England - at such a crisis it will be refreshing, I believe, to all her orthodox sons, to see something new from the pen of one of her most illustrious champions, and to find that even in this hour of peril and alarm, though dead, he yet speaketh."<sup>1</sup> What Heneage hoped in particular was that readers would be moved to fortitude by his father's comments on the account of the two witnesses in the Book of Revelation. To Heneage, "the Bishop's observations on" "the Nature of their Sackcloth ministry", "as descriptive of the events which since his time have befallen the church", and of those which are apparently hanging over her, appear to me to have been written, I am almost tempted to say, with the pen of inspiration".<sup>2</sup> For Horsley had premised that, in the coming times of Antichrist, "the powers of the world" would pretend to tolerate all Christian bodies, in the hope of "multiplying and encouraging sectaries"<sup>3</sup> to the detriment of the Church, would repudiate establishments of Christianity, would tolerate Islam and atheism, and (finally) would actively persecute Christians. Nominal Christians would fall away; by them "the

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Horsley, 'Of the Prophetical Periods', British Magazine, 4 (1833), 717-41 (p. 717n.). (Heneage's letter has been printed as pp. 717n. - 18n.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 718n.

<sup>3</sup> 'Manuscript Letters of Bishop Horsley', Brit. Mag., 5, (1834), 131-4, 135-41, 261-2, 406-12, 517-27; 6 (1834), 10-18 (5, p. 520). This pagination is that of each letter (plus any related addenda) in turn.

property of the clergy will be pillaged - the public worship insulted and vilified."<sup>1</sup> These deserters, who had never really been Christians, must be the Gentiles who would tread down "the outer court (national churches)",<sup>2</sup> while the true Christians constitute the temple and altar. The sackcloth ministry of the witnesses represents the ministry, under these circumstances, of the faithful: "There will be nothing of splendour in the external appearance of these churches; they will have no support from governments - no honours - no emoluments - no immunities - no authority - but that which no earthly power can take away, which they derive from Him who commissioned them to be his witnesses."<sup>3</sup> Their slaying will be effected by the two horns of the beast who represents "a pseudo-ecclesiastic power", the two horns being constituted by a false Church of nominal Christians and an equally bogus Church of "seduced Jews", both believing in the beast as Messiah.<sup>4</sup>

The passage about the witnesses occurs in the fifth of six letters Horsley had written to the anonymous author of a pamphlet of c. 1794 entitled Antichrist in the French Convention.<sup>5</sup> Heneage tells us that the author survived the bishop, but was now dead; his name, he says, "I do not think myself at liberty to divulge".<sup>6</sup> This man had

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 521.

<sup>5</sup> Their dates are as follows:- Letter I, 18 April 1797; Letter II, 4 July 1797; Letter III, 16 July 1797; Letter IV, 20 July 1797; Letter VI, 25 July 1797. Letter V is undated, but "was written twelve years after the commencement of the French revolution" (Heneage Horsley, ibid., p. 523n.), i.e. 1801. This statement of Heneage's must be incorrect, since Letter V refers to its predecessor as discussing "the meteors of the third and fifth trumpets" (ibid., p. 517), and these are dealt with in Letter IV (20 July 1797). In other words Letter V must be a near-contemporary of Letter VI (25 July 1797), which also mentions Horsley's previous "long letter upon the Falling Stars" - ibid., 6, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 5, p. 131n.

written to the bishop in January 1797, drawing attention to his two pamphlets - the one already named and another on The Second Advent. Horsley had then procured them, and he discussed them in the six letters. Heneage prefaced the printing of the letters with a hitherto unpublished dissertation of his father's 'Of the Prophetical Periods'.<sup>1</sup> It is undated, but possibly belongs to the early years of the new century: there are parallels between it and part of Horsley's letter of 26 May 1804 to Thomas Witherby, who had sent him his Attempt to remove Prejudices concerning the Jewish Nation (1801). To Witherby, the bishop says, "I agree with you that the expositors of the prophecies, particularly of the prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse, have been apt to begin at the wrong end; attempting first to explain the mystical dates, and then to find an interpretation of the prophecy, which may suit the dates as expounded by them; whereas the dates will certainly be the last things understood."<sup>2</sup> This is not only a theme pursued in Horsley's treatise, but also a close approximation to the wording of its second sentence: "The times, therefore, of prophecy, are certainly the last things that will be understood."<sup>3</sup> A later expression echoes the sentiment once more: "number being always the last thing in prophecy to be understood".<sup>4</sup>

These papers confirm the impression already gained from the Rochester Charge of 1800 that Horsley was moving towards futurism. The evidence is threefold, consisting in his departure from some norms of paradigmatical chronology, his placing of certain crucial events (e.g. the testimony of the witnesses) in the future, and his suggestion that only in the future will Antichrist be completely formed.

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<sup>1</sup> The dissertation is ibid., 4, (1833), [717]-41.

<sup>2</sup> Gentleman's Magazine, 80, new series (1810), p. 158.

<sup>3</sup> Brit. Mag., 4, p. [717].

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 738.

Horsley denies that the mysterious Danielic expression a "time" means a year; and he also goes so far as to dispute, as William Witherby was to do in 1821, the soundness of reading "years" for "days" merely on the basis of Ezek. 4 : 1-6, saying sardonically, "It might, as I think, with equal reason, and by the same analogy, be concluded that the word iron-plate, wherever it occurs in the writings of the prophets, is to be understood figuratively of the wall of a city; for the iron-plate of Ezekiel is as much a type of the wall of Jerusalem as his forty days of forty years."<sup>1</sup> Further, he attacks certain Median synchronisms, conceiving "the period of the 1260 days of the witnesses, and the 42 months of the gentiles, (and of the beast,) to be a period of the same length with the 1260 days of the 12th chapter, but a different period; - the two periods being separated by the whole interval between the prophetic date of Michael's victory and the commencement of Antichrist's final persecution, of which the 1260 days, or 42 months of the 11th and 13th chapters, are the period".<sup>2</sup> He endeavours to deduce chronology from events (cf. the sentence quoted from his letter to Witherby) by assuming, with reference to incidents and times in Rev. 12, that the woman's flight took place on 8 September 70 (when Jerusalem fell), and that Michael triumphed in 312 (when Constantine began to prevent the further persecution of Christians); he pronounces, accordingly, that 1,260 prophetic days must therefore equal 312 minus 70, i.e. 242, ordinary years. We have no space, or need, even to summarize his rather complicated calculations. It should suffice to say that the period called a "time" is thought by Horsley to consist of a round number of years of 360 prophetic "days"; and that the time, times, and half a time run from 70. Horsley believes that Antichrist's final persecution began in 1726 (when, he reckons,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 723.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 731.

the end of a time and two times may have fallen); this, he suggests, would be an appropriate date anyway, because "about the year 1726 the Atheistical Philosophy began to raise its accursed head in France."<sup>1</sup> This final persecution will last 1,260 prophetic days (i.e. 242 ordinary years), so the slaying of the witnesses, which he thinks will be Antichrist's last act in that persecution, will occur in 1968. The persecuting little horn is identified with France. Horsley admits the grave difficulty for his scheme that France as a nation did not exist in 70.

However, the futurism of Horsley's interpretation is the main point for us; and this futurism is reinforced by his further contention that "the finished Antichrist"<sup>2</sup> will be the wilful king, the symbol of a coalition of the Turk (the persecuting eastern Antichrist, the he-goat's little horn) and the persecuting western Antichrist, the little horn of the fourth beast. The Turk has been a horn since 1453. After 2,300 "days" (i.e. until, according to Horsley, 1894) the eastern Church will have been purged of insincere Christians. The same idea of the structure of "the finished Antichrist" reappears in Letter VI, wherein the bishop in horror exclaims, "Good God ! what a monster will this be ! - the Turk fraternized by the French democracy ! united in the nefarious project of exterminating the Christian religion; and, for that purpose, studiously corrupting the morals of their subjects, by releasing them from the restraints of matrimony. A business in which the French, at present, far outdo the Turk; but the Turk, I dare say, will be an apt scholar."<sup>3</sup>

As a final comment, it may be said that the Horsley of these papers compares somewhat with Bengel. Both were dissatisfied with the usual historicism; both were attempting a new approach, using arbitrary

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 736.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 740.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6 (1834), p. 12.

-looking calculations; both placed the greatest depredations of Antichrist in the future.



## CHAPTER V

### THE PARADIGM AND HISTORICIST PREMILLENNIALISM

#### A. The premillennialist trend: an introduction

In 1820 a lay theologian John Bayford, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, active member of the Jews' Society, and destined to some prominence in the Catholic Apostolic Church, issued a book called Messiah's Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> He sought therein to prove, by a systematic examination of Scripture prophecy, that from the Second Advent Christ will reign millennially and in person, here on earth, in association with his saints, including those from past ages. This doctrine is, of course, the purest and fullest-blown premillennialism. I shall now quote Bayford's illuminating description of the highly-respectable theology he had set himself to demolish; and our discussion can proceed from there :

"The most spiritually-minded men, amidst the signs and wonders which surround them, expect nothing more than a general amendment in the condition of civil society, through the universal spread of the gospel amongst all nations; and through the effects, which, under the Lord's blessing, may arise from the education and instruction of persons in every class of life. This is their Millennium - and they are apt for the most part to treat all those Scriptures, which declare in plain terms the personal coming and reign of the Lord Jesus upon earth, with his risen saints, as if they were merely figurative expressions; signifying the advancement and progress of the gospel, and the worldly honour and approbation with which ministers and pastors, and other distinguished Christians shall be greeted, in those days of increased light and knowledge, which their scheme anticipates. ... Indeed, as to Messiah's personal advent in any way, they think it very far off, and that it is to be expected at some remote and indefinite period, and at the end of what they call the Millennium." <sup>2</sup>

Into this short passage are compressed several key ideas, as

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<sup>1</sup> London. Bayford's Fellowship is recorded on the title-page. See LeRoy Edwin Froom, The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1946-54), vol. iii (1946), p. 409.

<sup>2</sup> Messiah's Kingdom, pp. 285-6.

follows. Bayford writes in times which he believes are rich in theological meaning and demand theological interpretation. The men whose indifference and errors he deplores are not sceptics, but eminently spiritual; yet he can accuse them of an attitude resembling secular optimism. They accept Scripture, but dodge its meaning by employing a figurative interpretation which to Bayford is vague, evasive, and perhaps even tinctured with worldliness. They believe there will be a Second Coming, but the belief has little impact on them: the event has been thrust away to the latter end of the millennium, i.e. they are postmillennialists. There were premillennialists and premillennialists, just as there were postmillennialists and postmillennialists, let alone divines who hedged, sometimes fudged, when the point arose. Nevertheless, accepting that a premillennialist is one who holds that the Second Advent, whatever its precise form, will precede the millennial reign, however envisaged, one can see this old position of Mede returning during what R.R. Palmer has called "the age of the democratic revolution"<sup>1</sup> - returning at first by fits and starts, and here and there; then, like a big theological wave, at last towering, breaking, and dispersing its waters all over the place, with the sensational crowded, and tumultuous career of Edward Irving.

We have already seen that premillennialism was to be found among futurist writers too; and, indeed, the historicist and futurist premillennialists were actuated to a great extent by common concerns, which we may list as the prevalence of political unrest, the apprehension of anarchy, and the aggressiveness of infidelity, as well as the positive desire to achieve a more literal exegesis of

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<sup>1</sup> The general title of his survey, 2 vols. (Princeton and London, 1959-64).

the prophecies. In Chapter IV we have already concentrated on picking out the special background of futurism; the present chapter will focus on the development of historicist premillennialism. In what will be virtually a complicated expansion of our treatment of Bayford's extract, we must inquire what conditions in general prompted the new rise of historicist premillennialism; what was the precise nature of premillennialism as a reaction against, and departure from, the eschatological divinity of the eighteenth century; and, in particular, what formed the premillennialist outlook of Edward Irving, and what was its influence. Two cautions must be sounded. In the first place, the separation, for analysis, of the influences sustaining the premillennialist surge is artificial, since they acted in concert. Secondly, Irving was somewhat unusual in writing about the history of his eschatological opinions; other premillennialists give us little or no direct information, and leave the researcher to try to place each in his apparent setting, where he may serve to illustrate a situation or a trend. All too often, certainty is denied us.

#### B. The political background to premillennialism

The reign of George III, which began auspiciously, with the accession again of a British-born king, amid the great victories in the Seven Years' War, soon ran into trouble. There was a series of unstable ministries until, in 1770, Lord North obtained power; there was the agitation over John Wilkes; and there was the clash of interests which led to the American War of Independence. As the latter war dragged on, unsuccessfully, there arose organized demands for political and economic reform. The Younger Pitt's retrenchment programme fell victim to the great war with Revolutionary and

Napoleonic France. The French overran most of mainland Europe and extended their menaces elsewhere. Ireland flared with rebellion, for which effective French help was a possibility to haunt the Government. The struggle to prise France's conquests from her was protracted, desperate, and costly in blood and treasure. After Waterloo and the peace settlement Europe fumed with discontent and incipient revolutions; finally, in 1830, there were widespread insurrections. In the elegant succinctness of G.M. Young, "Paris had risen against the Bourbons; Bologna against the Pope; Poland against Russia; the Belgians against the Dutch. Even in well-drilled Germany little dynasts were shaking on their thrones, and Niebuhr, who had seen one world revolution, sickened and died from fear of another."<sup>1</sup> In Britain, where the population was undergoing the strain of the early stages of industrialization, social privation, especially from 1815, plunged periodically into actual distress, accompanied by spasms of disorder and agitation by radicals, a situation to remind every educated person of 1789. After all, the panacea of political reform was being urged by the radicals, and the French Revolution had begun as a reforming-movement studded with mob-violence. Breaking of the new industrial machinery occurred in 1811, on a large scale and against a background of economic warfare with Napoleon (which severely hindered British exports) and bad harvests in 1809 and 1810. In 1812 William Cartwright's mill near Huddersfield was assailed during the hours of darkness by about a hundred and fifty Luddites. The defenders beat off the attackers, two of whom were slain. Soon afterwards William Horsfall, another Yorkshire manufacturer, was fatally wounded in an ambush. Luddism was to continue, spasmodically, for years to come,

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<sup>1</sup> Victorian England (London, 1936), p. [1].

in spite of stringent counter-measures.

Distress again peaked in 1815. Large-scale demobilization and the termination of war-contracts coincided with a big lapse in demand for British goods, itself the principal reason for the increased unemployment. In 1816, in the wake of a bad harvest, ricks were set ablaze in East Anglia, there was Luddism in Nottinghamshire, and in Bermondsey the Spa Fields riot. A meeting had taken place at Spa Fields on 15 November. It had agreed to petition the Prince Regent for annual Parliaments, manhood suffrage, and the secret ballot. Henry ("Orator") Hunt, who had organized this meeting, and brought French revolutionary symbols to it, carried the petition but was refused leave to present it. The better-known Spa Fields meeting of 2 December was called to protest against this rebuff. Just as Hunt was arriving, a group of fanatics (including Arthur Thistlewood) led away a section of the crowd in an attempt to seize the Bank and the Tower. An alderman and a few constables dispersed them, and the Army restored order. In early 1817 the Government reacted to this kind of ominous event by suspending Habeas Corpus and passing two anti-sedition Acts. Then the hungry Blanketeers tried to march from Manchester to London, each with a petition to the Regent to relieve the depressed state of the cotton trade. The march petered out after the early arrest of its organizers and numerous marchers. In the summer Jeremiah Brandreth, a framework-knitter living pauperized at Wilford, outside Nottingham, led the pathetic Pentrich rising. His purpose was to inaugurate a regime of plenty; his followers were men of Pentrich in Derbyshire; his immediate task was to take Nottingham; one of the more significant of his delusions was that a general rising was imminent. Many of his followers melted away in the rain. A magistrate with some

cavalrymen scattered the rest; and Brandreth and two of his followers suffered death for high treason.<sup>1</sup> "And it was in 1819," wrote T.S. Ashton in a minor classic, "when, once again, bread was scarce and trade at a low ebb, that the working-class Reformers of Lancashire gathered, and suffered, at St. Peter's Field."<sup>2</sup> The same year also saw the Six Acts passed, partly to clarify the law on sedition, partly to stop it. 1819 was also the year <sup>before</sup> of the Cato Street Conspiracy - Arthur Thistlewood's scheme to murder the Cabinet, in misplaced revenge for Peterloo, and to proclaim a republic.

An improved economic situation set in during the 1820s. There were better harvests and some enlightened fiscal measures, and trade expanded considerably.<sup>3</sup> Even in this halcyon period, nevertheless, numerous banks failed before joint-stock banks were allowed by law, and the repeal of the Combination Acts (1824) was followed by strikes, riots, and murders. High Tories were also shaken by the repeal of the historic Test and Corporation Acts. By the end of the decade, distress had returned, with, at the same time, the alarming news of the revolutions on the Continent. Luddism and rick-burning reappeared. In October 1831 cholera entered the country.

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<sup>1</sup> On Brandreth and his rising, see R.J. White, Waterloo to Peterloo, Peregrine edn. (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp. 170-83.

<sup>2</sup> The Industrial Revolution (London, 1948), pp. 154-5.

<sup>3</sup> This interval is reflected in the comparative optimism of Edward Cooper's The Crisis (London, 1825). A former Fellow of All Souls, evidently an Evangelical (pp. 134-7), and apparently a post-millennialist (e.g. pp. 2-3), he wrote of Protestant England, "Our difficulties have subsided; our troubles and our perils have passed away; peace and security are distinctly felt and enjoyed; the public burdens have been lessened; the public revenues are increasing; trade in all its numerous branches is flourishing; commerce is widely and rapidly extending itself; agriculture has greatly recovered from its temporary depression... Contrasted in all these respects with the Papal kingdoms of Europe, it stands forth a signal monument of the Divine mercy and favour ..." (p. 207).

This long period of social, national, and international eruptions saw the appearance of premillennialism, and not always on the political right. One of the left-wingers was Joseph Priestley. As a student at Daventry Academy he had imbibed a lifelong admiration for David Hartley's Observations on Man, in which (as we have seen) there is an earnest concern for prophecy. In the 1770s he enunciated an understanding of the Second Coming as figurative. During the French Revolution he advanced to a full premillennialism.

According to Clarke Garrett, Priestley's first work on the millennium was in 1772, in his Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion.<sup>1</sup> Garrett alleges that "A letter indicates that current events, in particular the developing crisis in the American colonies, were leading him to think about the Millennium"; and Garrett then quotes from this letter, which Priestley addressed to Theophilus Lindsey on 23 August 1771: "To me every thing looks like the approach of that dismal catastrophe described, I may say predicted, by Dr. Hartley ... I shall be looking for the downfall of Church and State together. I am really expecting some very calamitous, but finally glorious, events."<sup>2</sup>

Garrett, who is an interesting researcher into matters of prophecy,<sup>3</sup> and to whose 1973 essay on Priestley the framework of this present discussion is much indebted, has unfortunately outrun, on this occasion, the documentary evidence, since the letter in question

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<sup>1</sup> Clarke Garrett, 'Joseph Priestley, the Millennium, and the French Revolution', Journal of the History of Ideas, 34 (1973), 51-66 (p. 56).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. I have taken the precise date and the Priestleyan text from The Theological and iscellaneous Works of Joseph Priestley, ed. John Towill Rutt, nominally 25 vols., but vol. i (biographical) is divided physically into 2 vols. called Part I and Part II (London, [1817-32]), vol. i, pt. I ([1831]), p. 146.

<sup>3</sup> See also his Respectable Folly: Millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England (Baltimore and London, 1975).

does not mention the American troubles at all. What it does mention, constituting the paragraph immediately preceding Garrett's quotation, is a report that the project of a Feathers Tavern petition to secure relaxation of clerical subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles had been given up. The importance which Priestley attached to the enterprise is obvious from the paragraph :

"If I have been rightly informed, you were no more than twenty-four at the [first] meeting [at the Feathers], and you were in the chair, which I think it more to your honour than being at the head of any convocation or general council; but I hope I have not been rightly informed when I was told that, in consequence of some steps taken by the Bishop (I think) of Lincoln, your intended application to Parliament is dropped, and that nothing more will be done in the business. If this be true, in how striking a light doth it shew the danger of such complicated establishments ! Nothing, however, can deprive you of the honour of having endeavoured to bring about a reformation, and by posterity you will be remembered with gratitude and respect.

To me every thing looks like the approach of that dismal catastrophe ..."<sup>1</sup>

My reconstruction of Priestley's sequence of thought is as follows:- he is disappointed about the petition-project; he reflects on the Church Establishment; he remembers that Hartley had said that church governments and civil governments would fall together; he considers the State and the world as tottering towards that fall; and he

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<sup>1</sup> Theol. and Misc. Works, ed. Rutt, vol. i, Pt. I, pp. 144-6. Because of its place of origin, and because historically it looks so decidedly bound to an age of "Scripture-sufficiency", the petition now seems rather hard to take seriously. Yet Lindsey's language reveals the religious and moral gravity with which he viewed this attempted "reformation": "The cause is good and righteous, and in that, and the overruling providence of God, we must put our trust. And the cause will prosper now, if it fall in with the plan of Divine government, for this nation of ours, to check the growth of unprincipled dissoluteness in all ranks, the established teachers of righteousness more especially. But, si Deo aliter visum est, we must lay our hands upon our mouths, and hope we have, in some measure, delivered our own souls." (Lindsey - Mr. Turner, 1 November 1771, ibid., p. 147n.)



reminds himself that there will be a millennium. In the sense that Priestley's thoughts about the crisis would probably include the American trouble, Garrett may be correct. Yet the crisis was wider. Manifestations of it known to Priestley may have included the distress in London in 1768-9, the strikes there, the mass-abandonment of naval ships by sailors, who proceeded to shout in support of John Wilkes; the riotous attempt to pull Wilkes from prison and put him physically in the House of Commons; Wilkes's later expulsion from the House, leading to the founding of the Society for the Defence of the Bill of Rights and (presently, by schism) the Society for Constitutional Information. The Letters of "Junius" (signed as such from January 1769) began to appear in 1767, and were to continue until January 1772. "Junius" mordantly satirized those in authority and even attacked the King. Moreover, the great East India Company's affairs looked queasy; and in 1770 a dreadful famine began to devastate Bengal.

Nevertheless, the Institutes reveal that Priestley's doctrine of the millennium was then cautious indeed. Certainly Christ would come to destroy Antichrist; but "probably this coming ... will not be a literal one, but figurative, representing a most eminent judicial proceeding, in the exertion of that power in heaven and in earth, which was given to Christ after his resurrection."<sup>1</sup> It was also probable, he thought, that during the millennium Christ would not personally reign on earth in conjunction with the martyrs, and that the figurative language of Revelation indicated instead "the revival of the cause for which they suffered".<sup>2</sup> Priestly attempted to justify this position by contending that no rewards would be given before the judgement to follow the general resurrection; and he added, mentioning an

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<sup>1</sup> Institutes, in Theol. and Misc. Works, vol. ii (1781), pp. xv-380 (p. 365).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 366.

influential theologian who will be discussed in his proper place in this chapter, "Dr. Whitby has also advanced other very sufficient arguments against the literal interpretation of the Millenium [sic], which was adopted by some of the ancients, and, with some variations, hath been patronized by several modern divines, especially Mr. Joseph Mede and Bishop Newton."<sup>1</sup>

By 1788 Priestley had moved slightly nearer literalism. He speculated that Christ's millennial kingdom would be "in the world", but not "of the world in the sense in which our Saviour meant to be understood, viz. of such a kingdom as those of the world now are".<sup>2</sup> The work of this kingdom would be to judge the raised dead, which, Priestley reasoned, would need a very long time.

After 1788 he was embracing literalism. The Letters to the Members of the New Jerusalem Church, formed by Baron Swedenborg, composed before, but issued after, the riot against Priestley's property in Birmingham in 1791, take literally Matt. 24 : 30, John 14 : 3, 1 Thess. 4 : 13-17, and 1 Cor. 15 : 51-53: "Every particular of this account", he says as he sums up their teaching, "is wholly inconsistent with your idea of nothing but a spiritual coming of Christ."<sup>3</sup> In his 1793 Fast Sermon, Priestley's teaching emphasized the catastrophic. Antichrist ("probably the Papal power"<sup>4</sup>) would fall; so would the Turkish Empire; and, after a time of unprecedentedly great "calamity",<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 366-7.

<sup>2</sup> 'Difficulties in the Interpretation of some Prophecies not yet fulfilled, and Queries relating to them', in Theol. and Misc. Works, vol. vii (/1822/), pp. 447-50 (pp. 448-9). This piece, signed "Pamphilus", appeared in the Theological Repository, 6 (1788), 203-8.

<sup>3</sup> 1791. In Theol. and Misc. Works, vol. xxi (/1822/), pp. 43-86 (p. 72). The fair copy of the Letters was destroyed in the riot. Priestley then revised an earlier and imperfect copy. (See ibid., pp. 43-4.)

<sup>4</sup> A Sermon preached at the Gravel-Pit Meeting in Hackney, April 19, 1793 ..., in Theol. and Misc. Works, vol. xv (/1820/), pp. 494-518 (p. 513).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 514.

signified in Dan. 12 : 1, the Jews would be returned to Judaea and God's Kingdom inaugurated: the stone would smash the image, and fill the whole world. Priestley proceeded to reproduce "some interpretations of the book of Revelation" that "the eminently wise and good in every preceding age, and especially the persecuted for righteousness' sake" will "in some sense or other ... live and reign with Christ a thousand years".<sup>1</sup> He does not dissent from this opinion. In his next year's Fast Sermon Priestley stresses that the Divine Kingdom "will be a proper kingdom", by the side of which no others can exist as they might by the side of a "purely spiritual kingdom"<sup>2</sup>, and that it "will not be established without the greatest convulsions, and the violent overthrow of other kingdoms".<sup>3</sup> Under the pressure of the times, Priestley has let Whitby slip away; and, not for the last occasion in history, a dedicated liberal is fascinated by violence.

It had been through hearing Priestley "and other Socinians" express in their conversation "doubts ... respecting the doctrines of the Church" that William Hales (1747-1831) put himself on a more extensive study of Scripture.<sup>4</sup> Hales, a most learned Irishman, fought the revolutionary tendencies of his age on various fronts. He combated Unitarianism. He answered Paine's Rights of Man. And when a French force came ashore at Killala, captured a bishop, defeated General Lake, and advanced with rebel support as if to pass through Hales's parish of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 518.

<sup>2</sup> The Present State of Europe compared with Ancient Prophecies: a Sermon preached at the Gravel-Pit Meeting, in Hackney, February 28, 1794 ..., in Theol. and Misc. Works, vol. xv (/1820/), pp. 519-52 (p. 534).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 535.

<sup>4</sup> On Hales see the anonymous 'Memoir of William Hales, D.D.' in the British Magazine, 1 (1832), 321-8, 432-9, 553-9, and Warwick William Wroth in DNB. Both of my quotations are from Brit. Mag., ibid., p. 324.

Killeshandra en route for Dublin, the doughty rector stuck to his post, encouraged the inhabitants to loyalty, and eventually took the initiative in procuring troops to tranquillize the whole locality.

He also rapped a Roman bishop's knuckles, so to speak, for what he considered a very wrong pastoral letter on the Robert Emmet rebellion of 1803. Doing this, in his Letters on the Religious and Political Tenets of the Romish Hierarchy, addressed to Dr. Troy, titular Archbishop of Dublin,<sup>1</sup> Hales is to be seen as a rigorous, uncompromising opponent of concessions to Romanism, as an uninhibited spokesman for the Church and Protestant interests. Troy's Pastoral Exhortation of 1803 was, Hales admitted, loyal. Nevertheless, it was objectionable. "I shall", Hales declares, "confine myself to two points: 1st, your recrimination of the principles and practices of the first Reformers; and, 2d, your reprobation of the oaths and declarations of allegiance required from Roman Catholics; because, to pass over these without animadversion, would be to betray the cause of the REFORMATION, and of the PROTESTANT SUCCESSION in this realm."<sup>2</sup> Hales also condemns, as dangerously augmenting Romanist influence, "the lavish grants of political power in the elective franchise, and repeal of the penal laws; ... admission to the bar - ... the establishing a Popish seminary at Maynooth, with a revenue or endowment equal, if not superior, to that of the only Protestant University in the kingdom".<sup>3</sup> Hales's vast book, A New Analysis of Chronology (1809-12),<sup>4</sup> has similar themes. It criticizes the political timidity that accepted inroads on tithes, the

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<sup>1</sup> 2nd. edn. (London, 1813), which carries Advertisements to both edns. That to the 1st. edn. says (p. v) that the first seven letters appeared in the Dublin Journal; that to the 2nd. reports (p. iii), "This collection of Letters appeared in the Antijacobin Review, July 1807, and during the remainder of that year."

<sup>2</sup> Letters ... to Dr. Troy, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 20-1.

<sup>4</sup> 3 vols. in 4 (vol. ii is in 2 separate Books) (London).

abuses of the Toleration Act, and the legalization of intermarriage between Protestants and Roman Catholics, a measure which, with the proselytizing bent of the Romanist priesthood, has led to the increase of Papalism at the expense of the Protestant community.<sup>1</sup>

Hales was deeply pious and extremely hard-working. He was the most erudite of the premillennialists, writing on chronology, theology, mathematics, and science, and had occupied the chair of Oriental Languages at Trinity College, Dublin, of which he was both alumnus and Fellow. He gave up the chair in 1788 to take the rectory of Killeshandra, a remote parish in County Cavan, in the hope of finding time to complete his magnum opus on chronology. He did complete it, and he also proved an excellent priest. What moves Hales nearer to the centre of this study, in spite of the distance of his cure, is that he had a large English audience, some of it very distinguished. His friends included Lords Ellenborough and Kenyon, Spencer Perceval the younger, Bishop Porteus, Benjamin Kennicott, and Archdeacons Churton and Daubeney; and among his subscribers were numbered the Prince Regent, six princesses, three Lords-Lieutenant of Ireland, five archbishops, twenty-one bishops, and twenty-two secular peers.<sup>2</sup> Hales also published articles in the Orthodox Churchman's Magazine, which was a London periodical. Between February 1803 and December 1804<sup>3</sup> it carried a series of essays by him (as "Inspector") on "OUR LORD'S prophecies, relative to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; his Second Advent ... or 'personal appearance'; and his final Advent at the general judgment; which are

<sup>1</sup> See vol. ii, Book 2 (1811), pp. 1363-5. Persons unsuitable for the Christian ministry, says Hales (p. 1363) were exploiting the Toleration Act by obtaining ministerial posts which brought them payment and excused them militia service.

<sup>2</sup> These examples are selected from 'Memoir of Hales', Brit. Mag., 1 (1832), p. 437n. Cf. the subscription list in the New Analysis of Chronology, vol. i (1809), pp. [v]-xii. The list is headed by the Queen.

<sup>3</sup> Vols. 4 - 7.

recorded in the xxiiid, xxivth, xxvth, chapters of Matthew's Gospel; and are most interesting and important to present and future generations, 'to know and understand'".<sup>1</sup> The same series also discussed the prophetic numbers in Daniel "and the synchronizing prophecies of the Apocalypse".<sup>2</sup> The millenary kingdom of Christ is a topic which appears again in the New Analysis of Chronology and yet again in a shorter work he founded on the former, A Synopsis of the Signs of the Times, published in 1817.<sup>3</sup> Christ will return to reign millennially and act as Judge, and the righteous dead will be raised. With reference to his pre-millennialist interpretation of "the first resurrection", Hales declares, "It was ... the original doctrine of the Church of England at the commencement of the Reformation; as clearly and explicitly stated in Edward VI.'s Catechism, in 1553,"<sup>4</sup> and he refers the reader to the account in his larger book. Hales is very insistent on the traditional support for the whole idea of a millennium. In the Orthodox Churchman's Magazine, August 1804, he writes a striking peroration :

"The Scriptural doctrine indeed of the Millenium /sic/ ... has unhappily sunk into disrepute, by falling into the hands of Visionaries and Enthusiasts; to reclaim which, to its native lustre and dignity, as delivered by our LORD, his Apostles, the primitive fathers of the Church, and the Church, and the founders of the Church of England, that fairest offspring of the Reformation, is the humble, the honest, the anxious, and I will add, the disinterested object of the author of these very abstruse and unfashionable speculations, treading in the steps of Joseph Mede." <sup>5</sup>

Such an enormously learned and highly respected priest could hardly fail

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<sup>1</sup> William Hales, Dissertations on the Principal Prophecies: representing the Divine and Human Character of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2nd. edn. (London, 1808), Advertisement, pp. vi-vii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> Dublin.

<sup>4</sup> Synopsis of the Signs of the Times, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> 'Sacred Criticism. No. XIX', Orthodox Churchman's Mag., 7 (89-94), p. 94.

to carry some of his readership with him. Again, though some of his papers may have been "abstruse", there was serious practicality about his aims. He said in a conversation of 1818, "I wish to alarm people about the signs of the times, for I think there will be a great persecution in the next generation."<sup>1</sup> With this sentiment we are close to the young Newman.

Presumably Hales's work carried the special attraction of emanating from what could be thought of as, religiously and politically, "Indian country". Yet, of course, portions of England too seemed by 1819 to be turning into a sort of "Indian country". John Bayford detected in the tumults of that year the operation of one of the three unclean spirits now rampant, namely the spirit of revolution :

"It is not a little singular that, in July 1819, exactly thirty years from the first burst of popular fury, in the French Revolution of 1789, there are held in England immense popular meetings, regularly organized, in which opinions are avowed, and resolutions passed, of a completely revolutionary cast, and utterly subversive of the government; and that at one of them the first blood was shed, which was followed by a much larger effusion of blood at Manchester a month afterwards." <sup>2</sup>

He is moved to speculate whether the 2300 years ended in 1819.

The same author, as we shall presently show, was indebted to an exegetical novelty fashioned by John Fry, the learned incumbent of Desford, near Leicester. This device was the premillennialist interpretation of the Book of Psalms, of which Fry produced a new translation with notes. Fry's biggest book, The Second Advent (1822)<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> 'Memoir of Hales', Brit. Mag., 1 (1832), p. 557.

<sup>2</sup> Messiah's Kingdom, pp. 253-4. Big meetings were taking place before July. On 18 January, one at St. Peter's Field, Manchester, supported Radical political policy; so did another meeting there on 21 June and another at Stockport on 28 June. July meetings were held at Birmingham (12th.) Hunslet Moor (19th.), and Smithfield (21st.). See Donald Read, Peterloo, 2nd. edn. (Manchester, 1973), pp. 106-13.

<sup>3</sup> 2 vols. (London).

is repeatedly concerned to discourage rebellion :

"The Gospel church comes not into conflict with the existing authorities of the kingdoms of men. Its Master has ordered the most entire submission in his people to 'the powers that be'; even to the sovereign authority of this very fourth empire, which existed when he was upon earth; and which was then the inveterate persecutor of him and of his followers, and was long to be known in that character."

"Respectful submission to the authority of rulers, is a distinguishing characteristic of civilized society; without this, man becomes a savage."

"Not merely relaxation of discipline and of loyalty, but a despising of all government, and reviling of the persons of those that bear its functions, was to mark at length the apostasy of the last times." <sup>1</sup>

The climactic days of the Reform Bill agitation occasioned great concern, as they did to Irving. In the very interesting Preface to his Exposition of the Book of Revelation (1831)<sup>2</sup>, this vivid pre-millennialist referred to Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed,<sup>3</sup> his first work on prophecy, and said that since its publication

"there has been one continual series of events accomplishing the things therein laid down; and we seem at present standing on the brink of a great crisis, both in church and state, which all men now begin to apprehend. This day, when I write, the Parliament of Great Britain is dissolved, in order to make way for another which may be more obsequious to the passions of the people; for it is an idle thing to talk now of any ruler in this nation but the popular voice, of which the Reformed Parliament will be the appropriate organ. A very short while will unfold very great events. The time is indeed at hand. In foreign nations we behold the popular voice expressing itself in revolutions, and organizing itself into governments. And one thing is remarkable, that every where it prefers the monarchical form - the citizen king, instead of the Christian king. When the last infidel Antichrist shall arise - the eighth head, which is also of the seven - there shall be ten kings, who will give their power unto him, in order to accomplish the destruction of the Whore of Babylon. Can it be that we also shall have a citizen king, and fulfil the same destinies with the rest of the ten kingdoms ? Things look very like it at present." <sup>4</sup>

This Preface is dated 22 April 1831. Irving was in the full flood of

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from vol. ii, pp. 8, 274, 283, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> 4 vols. (London).

<sup>3</sup> Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed of God: a Discourse on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse which relate to the Second Advent, 2 vols. (Glasgow, 1826).

<sup>4</sup> Vol. i, p. viii.



his animus against democracy. After all, he was the Irving who in 1825 had discovered Bishop Overall's Convocation Book of 1606.<sup>1</sup> "I was astonished to find", reported Irving, in a letter-journal to his wife, dated 26 October, "the full declaration of what had been dawning upon my mind, viz. that the maxim, which since Locke's time has been the basis of all government, 'that all power is derived from the people, and held of the people for the people's good,' is in truth the basis of all revolution and radicalism, and the dissolution of all government; and that governors and judges, of whatever name, hold their place and authority of God for ends discovered in His Word, even as people yield obedience to laws and magistrates by the same highest authority."<sup>2</sup>

In Irving, who was a highly topical writer, the disturbed political, economic, and social background breaks through into the foreground of his theologizing. He apprehends "such an explosion of war as the world hath never yet seen".<sup>3</sup> He implies that the vain speakers described in 2 Pet. 2 : 18-19, who entice to "a liberty which is but the slavery of corruption", "despising government, and speaking evil of dignitaries", are to be identified with "the radical and liberal people, who have won and ruled the ascendant of all things, literary, scientific, political, and religious".<sup>4</sup> He attacks what to him is the spirit of disloyalty possessing striking workmen, and condemns the savage intimidation which succeeded the repeal of the Combination Laws. He wrings his hands over the bank failures, which

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<sup>1</sup> John Overall (1560-1619), who was one of the makers of the AV of the Old Testament, and was raised to the episcopate in 1614, drew up, in 1606, canons on civil government. The Convocation of Canterbury agreed them; but, though they denied a right of subjects to resist a ruler, James I objected to the doctrine therein that governments instituted after successful rebellions have divine authority; and the Book was not published until 1690. See (e.g.) Alexander Gordon on Overall in DNB.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Margaret O.W. Oliphant, The Life of Edward Irving, 2nd. edn., 2 vols. (London, 1862), vol i, p. 258.

<sup>3</sup> The Last Days (London, 1828), p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

have involved "the nation itself reeling and staggering like a drunken man".<sup>1</sup> According to Irving, all these things, and many others besides, prove that the last days have arrived.<sup>2</sup>

We must not leave this topic without making two final observations. One is that, with ironic suitability, the millennium was itself a revolutionary doctrine, now put forward in an age of revolution mostly by theologians who detested revolutions and dreaded them. Their millennium would be characterized by total discontinuity from the prevailing situation, and it would necessarily entail a drastic purgation of it. These traits, as M.H. Abrams has made clear in his literary study Natural Supernaturalism,<sup>3</sup> originated from Judaeo-Christian theology and have passed, in secularized forms, into the West's political inheritance :

"In its most recent and fateful forms this doctrine [of an absolute revolution] has usually claimed to base its predictions on valid reasoning from historical experience. But the course of history provides no valid grounds for large-scale certainty about the future; or at any rate, if the history of unhappy man demonstrates anything at all, it demonstrates that we have no reason to expect radical perfection either in man's moral nature or in his political, economic, and social institutions. The doctrine of absolute revolution has not an empirical but, ultimately, a theological basis; its certainty is a faith in Providence - a Providence converted into its secular equivalent of an immanent teleology, or dialectical necessity, or the scientific laws compelling historical events; and its prototype is the deeply ingrained and pervasive expectation in the Western world, guaranteed by an infallible text, of an abrupt, cataclysmic, and all-inclusive change which, after an indispensable preliminary of fierce destructiveness, will result in the perfection of an earthly paradise for a redeemed mankind." 4

Again - and this is the other observation - we may say, without any cynicism whatsoever, that the proponents of premillennialism who

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<sup>1</sup> Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed, vol. ii, p. 422.

<sup>2</sup> In Sermon I, The Last Days (pp. [1]-38), Irving tries to demonstrate that Scripture teaches that the time immediately preceding the Parousia will be evil. His text is 2 Tim. 3 : 1-5.

<sup>3</sup> New York, 1971.

<sup>4</sup> p. 63.

wished to block a political revolution were in a position vastly to outbid its advocates; for the theologians offered the near prospect of the greatest revolution of all, and one not even depending on human effort.

### C. The theological mood of the premillennialists

First, and most importantly, we must now try to indicate that premillennialism was a theological stance broadly describable as "against the eighteenth century". Exactly what the premillennialist divines were reacting against in that century is so complex as to require formal separation and listing. They attacked (1) the progress of rationalistic infidelity; (2) the weakening, as they saw it, of the historic Christian doctrine of God, in his initiative and immanence; (3) unjustified optimism respecting the progress of the Kingdom of God on earth; (4) the acceptance of a non-literalistic attitude to the Bible.

There is the further consideration that the mood of premillennialism cannot be comprehended without some reference to the feeling, backed by calculations, that the times were about to produce the Parousia and the millennium.

Lastly, as a kind of appendage to the discussion, one ought to demonstrate how through his posthumous work and John Fry's expansion of it, Bishop Horsley (never a merely peripheral figure in this study) strengthened the biblical resources of the premillennialists.

(1) The eighteenth century had been a great age of deism and rationalistic scepticism. Various Christian writers had touched on the possible eschatological significance of this predilection before, under the impact of the unprecedented doings of infidelity in the French Revolution, William Jones of Nayland made it an almost

inescapable theme for future exegetes of the prophecies. Its advent as an organized, aggressive, dictatorial, persecuting force was perceptibly dreaded. Irving, in Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed, accepted that there might be an attempt to instal not only a republican overnment, but also an infidel religion. He returned to the theme of the peril of infidelity when writing his 'Preliminary Discourse' to Lacunza. The Chilean, he said, "is too shrewd an observer of the spirit and as ects of human society, to doubt that it is infidelity which is to play the last desperate game of wickedness; yea, not to perceive that it is already doing its work masterfully, and hath been for the last thirty years".<sup>1</sup> In language reminiscent of 2 Thess. 2 : 7, Irving adds, "I am perfectly amazed at his insight into this mystery."<sup>2</sup> If, we may say, the "m stery" were bound presently to grow to its full and final proportions, then there would be all the more reason to expect the mightiest divine counterstroke: the Parousia, inaugurating the Kingdom's fullest development too.

(2) The theological disposition of the premillennialists in one way recalls that of Karl Barth in his Römerbrief, a document from a later age of crisis. There was an urgent desire to testify to God's initiativ , over against a confused world with no sharp a prehension of the paramount need for grace. It cannot be unimportant, also, that both Barth and many of the premillennialists were Calvinists. The Calvinistic Evangelicals contended by mental habit for the divine initiative, and, stimulated to renewed eschatological thinking by the age of revolution, they began to assert that initiative in the field of eschatological prophecy; no greater initiative seemed possible than

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<sup>1</sup> Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra [Manuel de Lacunza y Díaz], The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty, translated from the Spanish by Edward Irving, 2 vols. (London, 1827), vol. i, p. xxix.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

the inauguration, from above, of the millennium. This consideration would explain, at least in part, why so many Evangelicals became pre-millennialists. Irving, who, in spite of his attack on Evangelicalism, was essentially evangelical, described the secularized millennium as "the beau ideal of triumphant Arminianism".<sup>1</sup>

We must now study the decay of historicist premillennialism in the eighteenth century. Froom, in his pioneer work, is offended at this decay, and blames the Salisbury prebend Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), whom he took to be the originator of postmillennialism. Historicist premillennialism, of course, is dear to Froom's heart. He can write of "the obvious soundness of the main positions of the Historical School of interpretation",<sup>2</sup> characterize "the ... Whitbyan postmillennial theory" as "ruinous", a poison needing "the counteracting antidote of premillennialism",<sup>3</sup> and devote an appendix<sup>4</sup> to the task of refuting it. He attributes the adoption of postmillennialism to a profane confidence in the perfectibility of man without God's aid. Froom is entitled to his opinions; and one feels that his explanation of the welcome given to postmillennialism is not entirely wrong. Nevertheless, some other things must be said.

A minor point is that Whitby was preceded in modern times as a postmillennialist by Thomas Brightman (1562-1607). A rather more important thing is that one may take a somewhat more lenient view of Whitby's theory if one considers its general background and observes its actual content. True, Whitby might certainly be suspected of nursing a belief in perfectibility. The Enlightenment flourished

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. viii.

<sup>2</sup> The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers, vol. ii (1948), p. 791.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol. iii (1946), p. 265.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., vol. ii, Appendix C (pp. 805-7).

during his lifetime, throwing up all manner of plans for human improvement. He was six years younger than Locke, and survived him. We know that he was drifting from orthodoxy, an Arminian on his way to Unitarianism. He was prepared to define saving faith as intellectual assent to the Gospel's veracity; this, besides being unscriptural, was notoriously to be the view of Robert Sandeman,<sup>1</sup> and (according to Irving) to become rampant in Scotland.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the first step towards an historical appreciation of Whitby's eschatology must be that he was in reaction, as Locke was, against wild enthusiasm. The seventeenth century had been peculiarly given to this. One thinks straight away of the Fifth Monarchy Men, who were Mede's illegitimate legatees, and the antinomians. A less well-known item was later contemplated for use against Lewis Way. Henry Gauntlett (1762-1833), a respected Evangelical successor of John Newton at Olney (and father of the Victorian church musician) had argued in print against Way's "Basilicus" Letters, and intended to compose a more popular version of his case as a pamphlet. With the pamphlet, he proposed to reprint the story of a deluded clergyman and his supporters in Buckinghamshire in the 1690s. The clergyman, John Mason, the incumbent of Water Stratford, who must have gone mad, taught that he had seen Christ, and asserted that Christ's personal reign on earth had already begun - at Water Stratford. Several hundred people who believed Mason "fell" - to quote the scandalized though somewhat reticent prose of Gauntlett's daughter - "into a state of superstition, enthusiasm, and disorder, of as gross a character as any that has occurred since the period of the

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<sup>1</sup> 1718-71. The Sandemanian or Glasite sect was founded by his father-in-law John Glas (1695-1773). The great Welsh preacher Christmas Evans described Sandeman's view of justifying faith as "Naked Faith", "alias loveless faith". Quoted in T. Witton Davies, 'The McLeanist (Scotch) and Campbellite Baptists of Wales', Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society, 7 (1920-1), 147-81, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Coming of Messiah, vol. 1, pp. lxxxi, cxi.

Reformation".<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Mason predicted his own resurrection on the third day, which horridly had to be disproved. Gauntlett, who never completed his literary task, had drawn the conclusion "that the fact of a large number of persons being left to so deplorable a state of fanaticism, went far to prove that they must first have been led into doctrinal error"<sup>2</sup> - presumably into premillennialism. What gives Gauntlett's opposition to premillennialism all the more force is that he was no anti-premillennialist fanatic. At an earlier stage of his ministry he had helped a poor, almost unschooled man to publish an ingenious premillennialist tract (although unable to agree with its argument), and was sensible that "there is something in the hypothesis of the personal reign of the Messiah which, prima facie, is highly plausible; and, as far as it is believed, exceedingly affecting to the mind."<sup>3</sup> It is hard not to think/the latter part of this observation of Gauntlett's is a psychological perception worthy of Edmund Burke, and that it gives a most useful insight into the essentially Romantic nature of Irving.

Whitby's postmillennialist teaching was circulated in his bulky Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament, first published in 1703. The book reappeared in several further editions, the last one noticed in the British Library Catalogue being that of 1822. Obviously, it was one of the best-distributed commentaries of its century. Rather than offer the conventional form of commentary on the Book of Revelation, Whitby instead supplied a lengthy essay, originally in Latin, but later in English, entitled 'A Treatise of

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<sup>1</sup> Sermons: by the late Rev. Henry Gauntlett, Vicar of Olney, Bucks. With a memoir of the author, 2 vols. (London, 1835), vol. i, p. cxxi.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. cxxi - cxxii.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. xx.

the True Millennium'. In this Treatise, he denies that Christ will personally reign, with his saints, on earth during the millennium, and that the Temple will be rebuilt at that time. His arguments against the premillennialist opinion are numerous and various, ranging from (say) a denial that the millennium it envisages was normally believed in by the Early Church to the assertion that to return the saints from Paradise to earth would reduce their bliss. The positive doctrine Whitby advances is, on its human side, centred on the Jews, making him read like some antique and highly learned precursor of Lewis Way. He rehearses how in Scripture the Jews are recorded as being given a spiritual priority. God chose them; Christ was sent only to their "lost sheep"; the first Christians were Jews; Jerusalem, as at the time of the Council described in Acts 15, was the Church's capital. Conformably, the Jews will be the means of converting the Gentiles. Antichrist, whom Whitby connects with Roman Catholicism, whose idolatry currently impedes the conversion of the Jews, will fall. Satan will be bound. The ensuing millennium will be inaugurated by "a full Effusion of the Holy Ghost" upon the Jews, "somewhat resembling that which was vouchsafed to the first Ages of Christianity".<sup>1</sup> This effusion will convert the Jews, to whom the nations will flow in as converts of theirs. "There shall be such a glorious State of the Church, by the Conversion of the Jews to the Christian Faith, as shall be to it Life from the Dead"; "it shall then flourish in Peace and Plenty, in Righteousness and Holiness, and in a pious Off-spring."<sup>2</sup> "The Spirit and Purity of the Times of the Primitive Martyrs shall return."<sup>3</sup> Christ's invisible reign thus exercised over the Jews and

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<sup>1</sup> A Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament, 4th. edn., 2 vols. (London, 1718), vol. ii, p. 14, col. 1 ('A Treatise of the True Millennium', ch. II.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 9, col. 1. ('A Treatise ...' ch. II.)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. ('A Treatise ...' ch. II.)



Gentiles will last a thousand years. Then he will be manifested in judgement at the Second Advent.

One can see that Whitby has denied the personal reign and introduced figurative interpretation, as in his treatment of the notion that the martyrs will live again on earth. On the other hand, the scheme has some conservative features. Whitby retains the idea of the Roman Antichrist. It is presumably the divine initiative that will topple Antichrist; and the conversion of the Jews will certainly be effected by the Holy Spirit, who is beyond human control. Again, it is difficult to see Whitby's scheme as optimistic about human perfectibility without God. In reviewing it we seem a long way from the Christian meliorism soberly attacked by Bayford and vehemently by Irving.

Later commentators weakened Whitby's conservatism. In fact, in the long run (naturally outside the scope of this essay), post-millennialism gradually became secularized into profane utopianisms. This process has been traced, for the U.S.A., by Jean B. Quandt.<sup>1</sup> "The faith that the kingdom of God would be gradually realized in this world; justice, peace and love would eventually reign supreme;" the belief in "the gradual redemption of the world under the influence of Christ's spirit rather than his physical presence"<sup>2</sup> - the secularization of this complex of ideas occurred through the admission of a role for human agencies and institutions in "redeeming" the world. Conspicuous parts were to be played (it was thought) by free institutions, education, the social sciences, and technology, especially in transport and the press. Meanwhile, Christian conversion was transmogrified, by

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<sup>1</sup> 'Religion and Social Thought: the Secularization of Postmillennialism', American Quarterly, 25 (1973) 390- 409.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 391.

those who contemplated the secular millennium, into individual moral reformation. A classic stance was that of the young John Dewey in the 1880s and 1890s : "he combined Idealistic philosophy, modern science and liberal Protestantism into his own version of the coming kingdom."<sup>1</sup> This way of thinking now looks terribly dated; it also shows Maitland and even Irving as having prophetic significance in detecting the real drift of postmillennialism. The postmillennialists in our period of study, however, merely show the first signs of doctrinal dilution and secularization. 'Matthew Henry' (actually his biographer William Tong) hedges or fudges; I take it he felt obliged to cater for all. The resurrection of saints in Rev. 20 may be literal or figurative; their thrones and jurisdictions would be "I suppose rather of a spiritual, than a secular Nature"; "those who suffer with Christ shall reign with him in his spiritual and heavenly kingdom."<sup>2</sup> Moses Lowman, in A Paraphrase and Notes on the Revelation of St. John (1737),<sup>3</sup> alludes darkly to "the Mistakes" and "dangerous Errors that some may have fallen into, by indulging too far unreasonable Fancy, and ungrounded Imagination"; "the true Millennium will be very far from an unreasonable Doctrine, or a dangerous Enthusiasm."<sup>4</sup> Lowman sets out the case for a literal reading, but gives a lengthy summary of Whitby's view, and then plumps for the latter, which he proceeds somewhat to expurgate:

"The figurative Interpretation, viz. that this Prophecy should mean an happy State of the Church on Earth, well answers the whole Design of the Prophecy, and appears the easier and more probable Meaning of the Words.

The Church in Peace, free from Persecution, and all deceitful Arts of Satan and wicked Men, enlarged with the Conversion of the Jews, and Fulness of the Gentiles, serving God as a Kingdom of Priests ..."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 404.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry, An Exposition of the Old and New Testament, 6 vols. (London, 1707-21), vol. vi (1 21), p. 716, col. 2.

<sup>3</sup> London.

<sup>4</sup> Lowman, Paraphrase, p. 247.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

What has become of the priority of the Jews in this exposition ?

Philip Doddridge, in his Family Expositor at Rev. 20 : 2, on the expression "a thousand years", says, "See Dr. Whitby's Treatise on the Millennium."<sup>1</sup> For those unable to consult Whitby, this is Whitby diluted: where are the references to the "full Effusion of the Holy Ghost" and (again) the Jews ? Charles Buck, in his Theological Dictionary of 1802,<sup>2</sup> gives it as his personal opinion that before the general judgement the Jews will be converted, the Gospel will gradually penetrate all nations, and Christ will reign in his spiritual presence for a thousand years or more. The Methodist Adam Clarke's New Testament expresses on Rev. 20 : 2 the conviction "that the earth is in a state of progressive moral improvement; and that the light of true religion is shining more copiously every where; and will shine more and more to the perfect day".<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the Whitbyan emphasis on the special office of the Jews was hardly more than hinted at in Jonathan Edwards's treatise An Humble Attempt to promote ... Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion, published at Boston, Massachusetts, in 1747 and reprinted here.<sup>4</sup> Edwards's own stress is on the need, and possibility, of world-conversion. This end is promised in prophecy; the means, for which Edwards again claims scriptural backing, is the securing of the explicit agreement of large numbers of Christians in various lands to pray for the effusion of the Holy Spirit "till whole nations be awakened

<sup>1</sup> Family Expositor, 6 vols. (London, [1739]-56) (vols. iv-vi ed. Job Orton), vol. vi (1756), p. 583n.

<sup>2</sup> 2 vols. (London). The reference is to the art. "Millennium", vol. ii, p. 130, col. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The New Testament ... with a Commentary and Critical Notes, 3 vols. (London, 1817), vol. iii (unpaginated), ad loc.

<sup>4</sup> An Humble Attempt ..., in The Works of President Edwards, ed. E. Williams and E. Parsons, 8 vols. (Leeds, 1806-11), vol. ii. (1807), pp. [431]-541. The only clear reference I have detected to the office is on p. 455, para. 2, where Edwards interprets Rom. 9 in this sense. (Part II, Sect. I.)

..."<sup>1</sup> In the course of this book, Edwards cites a number of objections to the idea, and tries to answer them. The most interesting of these objections for our present purposes is the following :

"Another objection, very likely to arise in the minds of many against such extraordinary prayer for the speedy coming of Christ's kingdom, is, that we have no reason to expect it, till there first come a time of most extreme calamity to the church, and a prevalence of her antichristian enemies against her; even that which is represented in Rev. xi. by the slaying of the witnesses." <sup>2</sup>

To this point, Edwards answers that (among other considerations) the slaying of the witnesses must have taken place at the Reformation, and that the Reformation saw the radical weakening of Antichrist. This latter contention he supports by reference to Moses Lowman's statement that the fifth vial is a prophecy of this weakening. At length Edwards gets himself drawn into a most tedious discussion of prophecy, his main text being strung out thinly, like some rope-bridge, over vast depths filled with choking masses of tall footnotes.

Let us venture a verdict on this important, though prosaic, production.<sup>3</sup> Edwards's reputation has been put on the side of an interpretation of the prophecies which could easily pass over into the view that what mattered was not the Parousia, but the degree of human exertion required to bring in the millennium. If this interpretation be correct, theological irony comes in, since Edwards, who elsewhere attacked Whitby's Arminianism, is here laying a foundation for hardly less than Pelagianism.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 437.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 495.

<sup>3</sup> One should also notice that there is a tension between gradualism and apocalyptic literalism in this book. Amidst the "tall footnotes" is an incidental revelation of how Edwards envisaged the Spirit-inspired conversion of the world as a lengthy process indeed, though leading into the millennial situation (ibid., p. 521n.); yet relatively soon, under the sixth vial, and before the millennium, there is to be a manifestation of Christ which will alarm Antichrist into gathering forces against him for the eschatological struggle (ibid., pp. 529-32).

Against the drift to meliorism the premillennialists insisted on God's initiative. It can be seen too that premillennialism also emphasizes God's immanence. This dwelling upon God's immanence is, with both the premillennialists and the Tractarians, a reaction against the eighteenth-century tendency to concentrate on his transcendence, a tendency to be observed in its purest form in deism, as in the following passage from Thomas Paine's The Age of Reason :

"Could a man be placed in a situation, and endowed with the power of vision, to behold at one view, and to contemplate deliberately, the structure of the universe; to mark the movements of the several planets, the cause of their varying appearances, the unerring order in which they revolve, even to the remotest comet; their connection and dependence on each other, and to know the system of laws established by the Creator, that governs and regulates the whole, he would then conceive, far beyond what any church theology can teach him, the power, the wisdom, the vastness, the munificence of the Creator."<sup>1</sup>

To Newman, to Irving, this eloquent passage would have seemed "cold".

They were like William Blake, for whom

"The Atoms of Democritus  
And Newton's Particles of light  
Are sands upon the Red sea shore,  
Where Israel's tents do shine so bright."<sup>2</sup>

The resemblance was this: all had thoughts of spiritual possibilities in the apparently limited and mundane. Newman and Irving were, of course, sacramentalists. Newman came to believe, while still a Churchman, in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements; and Irving declared, "I would rather, if I had no other choice, hold with a church that believed in transubstantiation, than with another which believed the supper of the Lord to be but a commemorative sign."<sup>3</sup> It is again symptomatic of Irving's bold immanentism that he invoked the gifts of the Holy Spirit to appear in his religious community;

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<sup>1</sup> Part II, Conclusion. Text in Basic Writings of Thomas Paine, ed. Richard Huett (New York, 1942), pp. 251-2.

<sup>2</sup> These untitled verses begin "Mock on, Mock on Voltaire, Rousseau." From the complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. Sir Geoffrey Keynes, 4th. edn. (London, 1939), p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> Coming of Messiah, vol. i, p. xxv.

that he taught that the solidarity of Jesus Christ with fallen mankind was total, in that the Saviour was potentially liable to actual sin, from which only the operation of the Spirit preserved him; and that he fervently believed that Christ would reign personally during a blessed time on earth. Burning through the quaintness of Irving's address when he expostulated with any who would explain the prophecies about earth as figurative, is a tremendous passion for the deliverance of the whole creation : "Who art thou ? a man ! that speaketh so of this earth, to reclaim which the Lord of glory came down, and was a despised and rejected servant ?"<sup>1</sup>

It may not be amiss to refer to Barth again. Irving's great stress on the redemption of the everyday, his thorough immanentism, reminds one of the difficulty Barth had in getting through to Harnack. The latter, by a more modern "spiritualization" of the New Testament message, this time as meaningful only in its influence on a person's religious awareness, minimized (in effect) its impact on the material. T.F. Torrance says that Harnack

"obviously had a horror of all corporeality, and so misunderstood and vigorously attacked the realistic emphasis in the New Testament and in the Early Church upon externality and somatic existence. Hence some of the great terms of the faith such as sōma, physis, sarx, thanatos, zōē, anastasis, etc. were offensive to him. Belief in miracles, that is in the action of God in our flesh and blood existence, was painful - but behind it all, as Barth has pointed out, Harnack had a horror of the being of God in his revelation, of the being and action of God in history and in the midst of humanity."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed, vol. ii, p. 237. Irving also writes (Coming of Messiah, pp. lxxviii - lxxix), "Behold those seven letters of Christ to the churches in Asia, if they be not all built upon the great events which are about to come unto the earth. There is not a promise in one of them that doth not centre upon the earth. And our Lord's coming, of which the apostles make such constant use, is always a coming to the earth, an earthly event, an event the most grand in the history of this world, and the beginning of all its blessedness."

William Burgh wrote, against those who dismissed the earth as of no consequence, "... May we not say that any thing that was worth HIS creating, is worth his redeeming" (The Coming of the Day of God, Dublin, 1821, p. 14).

<sup>2</sup> Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology, 1910-1931 (London, 1962), p. 73.

What has just been said about the immanentist nature of the sacramental theology and premillennialism of Irving is enough to suggest, quite strongly, the presence of another cultural influence on the premillennialist outlook: that is, the Romantic movement.

Romanticism fed both immanentism and premillennialism. It perceived a spiritual depth in the ordinary; it engendered religious rapture, passion even; it sought to surmount conventional limits; it dreamed of, and reached after, vast ideals; and it often used the language of the Bible. Romanticism also generated a taste for the poetry of private meditation. The pioneering work in this genre was Edward Young's celebrated production The Complaint; or, Night Thoughts (1742-5). At the very beginning we are invited into a world of individual spiritual Angst :

"Tir'd Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep !  
He, like the world, his ready visit pays  
Where fortune smiles; the wretched he forsakes;  
Swift on his downy pinion flies from woe,  
And lights on lids unsullied with a tear.

From short (as usual) and disturb'd repose,  
I wake: how happy they, who wake no more !  
Yet that were vain, if dreams infest the grave.  
I wake, emerging from a sea of dreams  
Tumultuous; where my wreck'd desponding thought,  
From wave to wave of fancied misery,  
At random drove, her helm of reason lost.  
Tho' now restor'd, 'tis only change of pain,  
(A bitter change !) severer for severe.  
The day too short for my distress; and night,  
Ev'n in the zenith of her dark domain,  
Is sunshine to the colour of my fate."<sup>1</sup>

In the same general tradition as the Night Thoughts, but more immediately germane to the concerns of this chapter, was a series of meditations composed by Bishop Horsley's friend the layman Edward King (? 1735-1807), a barrister of independent means, a recorder of King's

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<sup>1</sup> The Poetical Works of Edward Young, with a life of Young by J. Mitford, Aldine edn., 2 vols. (London, n.d.), vol. i, pp. [1]-2. Young also wrote a poem entitled "The Last Day" (ibid., vol. ii, pp. [1]-34).

Lynn, and a student of the Constitution, the national debt, English archeology, and, moreover, of prophecy.<sup>1</sup> In his case, premillennialism perhaps represented, among other things, an answer to spiritual anxiety. The meditations were issued as his Hymns to the Supreme Being. In Imitation of the Eastern Songs. The first edition (1780) was anonymous. The secret of King's authorship got out, though this did not prevent the Hymns from being attributed to other authors. Again, since the work had not been entered at Stationers' Hall, unauthorized editions were published, with errors. Finally, in exasperation, King brought out an enlarged second edition in 1798.<sup>2</sup> Mysteriously - I had almost said "Romantically" - King wrote, in his "Preface to the Reader" (1798), "The same awful apprehensions which filled my mind, when in my most private hours, with great sincerity of heart, I wrote these Hymns, prevented my thinking it right openly to avow myself the Author, when I published them."<sup>3</sup> King's confession of sin will give a fair idea of the meditations: personal; sincere; the language reconstituted

Bible :

"I said I would walk uprightly in the  
Sight of God, and keep His most  
Righteous Commandments.

2. I said, I would set my heart  
to do good, and eschew all manner  
of evil.

3. And it was for a time my delight to  
walk uprightly: and I rejoiced in the Hope  
of the Favour of God.

4. But the deceitfulness of my heart  
hath cast me down; and mine inconstancy  
hath overthrown me." 4

Hymn V of Part III looks decidedly premillennialist :

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<sup>1</sup> King (on whom see George Goodwin in DNB) was the addressee of Bishop Horsley's Critical Disquisitions on the Eighteenth Chapter of Isaiah, in a Letter to Edward King (London, 1799).

<sup>2</sup> King gives an account of the publishing history of his Hymns in the Preface to the Reader in the 2nd. edn. (London, 1798), pp. [v]-vii.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. [v].

<sup>4</sup> Hymns, 1st. edn. (London, 1780), p. 65. (Part the Second: Hymn VI.)



"I shall see Him; - but not now:- I shall behold Him; - but not nigh.

2. A light shall arise out of Sion; and Glory from the Land of Israel.

3. For, Lo, The Lord our Saviour shall descend from Heaven; and shall plant His Tabernacle with the sons of men.

4. And He shall call the righteous from their graves; and His faithful Servants, that they may behold His glory.

5. In him shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed: and the Mighty Work of God shall be perfected.

6. There shall be peace upon earth, and abundant Good-Will towards men; and an Increase of Knowledge, that shall shine forth unto Eternity.

7. And the Kingdoms of this World, shall become the Kingdoms of the Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall Reign for ever and ever.

8. In the hope hereof, O Lord, let my soul depart in peace: and may I be numbered with Thy Servants, in the Last Day." <sup>1</sup>

Among Scripture references cited in a footnote to verse 4<sup>2</sup> is Rev.

20 : 4. Hymn VII, of Part III, a piece added in the second edition, assumes destruction by fire and a re-creation after the reign on earth. There are other hints of premillennialism elsewhere in King. In another work published in 1798, Remarks on the Signs of the Times,<sup>3</sup> he contends that the Christian world has been "blinded by ... the presumptuous mystical application, that has taken place; by means of applying those holy words [about Christ's return in glory] that relate to the latter [advent], merely to the fancied prosperity of the Christian church on earth. Though such fancied prosperity, is a misapplication of the words, in direct contradiction to all the warnings of our blessed Lord himself, and of his holy Apostles."<sup>4</sup> 1798 saw two

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 131-2. King also contributes a note on the remarkable geographical suitability of the Holy Land to be the centre of Christ's universal millennial Kingdom (ibid., pp. 122-3).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 131n.

<sup>3</sup> London.

<sup>4</sup> pp. 26-7.

editions of this work. Earlier, in 1788, King had brought out his amusingly named Morsels of Criticism<sup>1</sup> (the two volumes together occupying over 600 quarto pages, albeit with ample margins). The Morsels were dedicated to the Bishop of London. The author says, apparently referring to the Second Coming as the "first", "There [in Revelation] indeed we moreover find, that it [the conflagration] is not to take place, on the first coming of our Lord; but at a great distance of time after: even when the glorious state of things (which shall have been by Him restored even upon earth) shall, by the malice of evil minds, be again corrupted; and a second attempt shall have been made, on this globe, to subvert the whole."<sup>2</sup>

It ought also to be noticed, in passing, that King is a predecessor of Frere and Irving in employing Esdras-material, which he attempts in the Signs to rank as properly prophetic.

With symbolic appropriateness King had a residence at Beckenham, and was buried there, in the churchyard. Beckenham was where Irving was to retire to translate Lacunza.

(3) The Romanticism which we have discerned behind the yearning for the millennium also impinged on Irving's concept of mission. But a paradox was involved here; for, while calling with magnificent rhetoric for missionaries of the utmost zeal - single-minded for the Gospel, self-denying, without thought of worldly prudence, careless of self-preservation, fearless of death, content to be fools for Christ - the world was expected to remain largely unresponsive to their evangel. Only a few elect would be converted, taken out of the world to testify against obduracy within it. The

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<sup>1</sup> London.

<sup>2</sup> Morsels, vol. ii, p. 553.

world was in sin; the religious societies were in sin; world-conversion could not be expected - only judgement. Undoubtedly this theological pessimism was the product of several influences. Among these, we may suggest, were the political background, grey when not terrifying; the way in which the bright religious hopes of an earlier age were now almost dashed, an extreme reaction setting in; the new emphases on the divine initiative and immanence; even, perhaps, a certain Romantic melancholy among the premillennialists: men of visions rather than plans. It may not be impertinent to observe, in this respect, that, by the time the premillennialist movement was in full flood, the voices of the young Wordsworth, of Coleridge, and of Keats had been succeeded, in the dying fall of Romanticism, by the pessimistic accents and imperfectly-integrated vision of writers like Darley, Beddoes, and Thomas Hood.<sup>1</sup>

(4) As we know from recent history, times of crisis produce recurrences of fundamentalisms. The apparent failure of culture in the Revolutionary age - the revolutions, the wars, a portentous-looking future - must have been a major reason for the movement towards a new biblical literalism, seen in both premillennialists and futurists. In this movement the futurists had gained the lead, while the historicists still fumbled with their famous "symbols", often inherited from the occult studies of Mede and hallowed by long use. Nevertheless, persons otherwise as disparate as S.R. Maitland and Lewis Way argued for the personal, bodily, millennial reign of Christ in company with his resurrected saints; and Irving, aroused by the personal crisis of his son Edward's death as an infant to a vehement critique of the usual

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<sup>1</sup> On this literary decline see John Heath-Stubbs, The Darkling Plain (London, 1950), especially Chapter I, "The Defeat of Romanticism".

views about death and the millennium, exclaims,

"It is most manifest that if sayings such as these, 'we shall reign upon the earth,' 'I will give them power over the nations,' 'I will make thee a pillar in the New Jerusalem which cometh down from my God out of heaven,' 'thou shalt stand in thy lot in the end of the days,' 'his feet shall stand upon mount Olivet,' &c. &c. with all the events therewith connected, are not to be fulfilled on the earth, what can one who receives the Scriptures do, but forget their prophetic character altogether, and spiritualize them as darkly and dimly shadowing forth something which is to be elsewhere?"<sup>1</sup>

The period 1789-1830 was also distinguished by an entire gallery of great scientists - Priestley, Sir Humphrey Davy, John Dalton, Michael Faraday, to mention only Englishmen. Science had long been building up in the public mind an awareness of the significance of what seemed to be irreducible fact. When referring to the correlative of all this in exegesis of the Bible, we have to think of "the text itself" as corresponding to "scientific fact". The Benthamites too, of course, were similarly affected, and wished to gather facts in order to engineer social improvements.

To be a premillennialist, then, was to be addicted to theological "hard facts".<sup>2</sup>

Again, the times were running out, spectacularly, producing an expectation of the even more spectacular. For many interpreters the French Revolution had marked the end of the 1,260 years of the historicist scheme. Revolution in France had been succeeded by war over Europe; the Papacy had come near to extinction; organized infidelity had suddenly been revealed as a glaring menace.

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<sup>1</sup> Coming of Messiah, vol. i, p. lxxxiv.

<sup>2</sup> The Romantic theologian might thus be also a hard-fact man. Heath-Stubbs aptly remarks (The Darkling Plain, p. 48), "The Romantic Movement is capable of several, and in some degree contradictory, interpretations."

What now of a slow evolution towards a paradisaal world of righteousness ? Would not the advent of the eschatological Kingdom be amidst disorder, war, terror, persecution ? Would not the pace of the apparently divinely-directed events be maintained rather than slackened ? Was it likely that the Parousia would be put off for at least another thousand years ? Surely there was logic in accepting premillennialism ?

A new consideration now appeared, sprung upon the exegetes by Bishop Horsley and expanded rather elegantly by John Fry. Fry was a relatively prolific author and a man of genuine learning. Although overlooked by modern research he is a good example of the premillennialist movement's power to attract the occasional scholar. He was the son of a gentleman farmer of Tunbridge Wells, and matriculated at University College, Oxford, on 19 July 1794, aged nineteen. He gained his B.A. in 1798. On 2 March 1801 he was instituted as Rector of Desford. He was an excellent parish priest, and died in office on 21 June 1849. At one time he was also chaplain to Viscount Ranelagh.<sup>1</sup> Apparently Fry was an Evangelical: this is my interpretation of his stress on election; his adherence to the penal substitutionary theory of the Atonement; his comment on a passage in Isaiah that it "seems to point out these notorious and shamelessly wicked men, as the strenuous preachers of the doctrine of the merit of works";<sup>2</sup> and, though a

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<sup>1</sup> On Fry see Alumni Oxoniensis, 1715-1886, ed. Joseph Foster, 4 vols. in 2 (Oxford, 1887-8), vol. i (= i + ii) (1887), p. 499, col. 1; Gentleman's Magazine, new series, 32 (1849), p. 216; W.T. Hall, The Rectors of Desford in the County of Leicester, with Other Village Notes, duplicated typescript (sine loco (Medmenham ?), 1937), pp. 20-1. Elisabeth M. Dickson, History in Desford (Leicester, 1974), pp. 50, 52. Interesting letters to Fry from his sister Caroline Wilson (1787-1846) appear in Caroline's An Autobiography; Letters, and Remains, of the Author of 'The Listener', 'Christ our Law', &c., ed. Mr. Wilson (London, 1848). Cautiously keen on the great expectation, she reported to Fry in 1826 that ardent London premillennialists (Irving etc.) were using his learned studies while far outrunning his interpretation of current events. See An Autobiography ... pp. 92-7.

<sup>2</sup> The Second Advent, 2 vols. (London, 1822), vol. i, p. 135n.

writer not given to typographical emphases, his printing the expression "justification by faith", when it occurs on one of his pages,<sup>1</sup> in upper-case letters. There is much of interest in Fry quite apart from his book on the Psalms. For instance, he uses the word "dispensation" to a noticeable extent. It was to become a vogue word. Lewis Way employed it repeatedly in his "Basilicus" letters; and, as Iain H. Murray perceives, it was a favourite word of Irving's, to be taken up by John Nelson Darby.<sup>2</sup> The fundamental fact must be that the premillennialists found it a useful word when writing about a theology characterized by stress on discontinuity and the divine initiative. Another remarkable point about John Fry is that he makes a Christological statement which seems almost to anticipate Irving: "The humanity ... of our divine Master, though pure and sinless, was not devoid of that weakness which is essential to the creature, and which belongs to the verity of our nature."<sup>3</sup> Again, though hesitantly, Fry has come to believe with G.S. Faber and others, "that the last struggle of Christ's holy religion will be with practical atheism, and not so much with superstition, idolatry, or any such corruption of religion, as had generally been the character of the warfare of the church in former ages".<sup>4</sup>

On the evidence of Fry's Canticles, a new translation with notes (1811),<sup>5</sup> he was not originally a premillennialist. In his Lectures, Explanatory and Practical, on the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans (1816)<sup>6</sup> he was perhaps edging towards premillennialism.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol. ii, p.98.

<sup>2</sup> Iain H. Murray, The Puritan Hope (London, 1971), p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> Lyra Davidis (London, 1819), p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>5</sup> London.

<sup>6</sup> London.

Commenting on Rom. 8 : 21 he speaks of "the wished-for time of the manifestation of the sons of God; when it [the earth or creation] will be formed into a habitation, and be regulated for the service of the redeemed in a state of glory and eternal perfection. For, even supposing the passage referred to, is to be understood as altogether figurative, it must have its accomplishment in corresponding realities."<sup>1</sup> Clearly premillennialist, however, is Fry's Lyra Davidis (1819).<sup>2</sup> The sub-title runs, "or a new translation and exposition of the Psalms; grounded on the principles adopted in the posthumous work of the late Bishop Horsley; viz. that these sacred oracles have for the most part an immediate reference to Christ, and to the events of his First and Second Advent". We find utterances like this :

"I fully agree with Bishop Horsley, that this Psalm [46] relates to the wars and insurrections in the latter ages, and to the final victory over the apostate faction: he supposes a particular reference to the restoration of the Jews, which he says 'will be one of the first things at the season of the second advent'. Perhaps we should state the subject more correctly, by saying, the prophetic Spirit has in view the general business of the second advent; and dimly shows, what subsequent prophecies have more illustrated, how a mighty struggle on the shores of Palestine, in connexion probably with the restoration of Israel, will end the conflict with the powers of the earth, and lead to the establishment of the glorious reign of Christ and his saints. It is impossible for us at present to distinguish the connexion of these events; viz. the last efforts of the Anti-christian powers - the expedition in Palestine - the restoration of the Jews - the coming of Christ - the judgment of his enemies - and the establishment of his millennial kingdom; but that they are connected together, seems clear from the general tenour of prophecy." <sup>3</sup>

In another place, Fry emphasizes that not only Christians who have been martyred will be raised to participate in the millennium: "ALL THE ELECT of God ... all that overcome the world by faith"<sup>4</sup> will be raised.

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<sup>1</sup> pp. 340-1.

<sup>2</sup> London.

<sup>3</sup> Lyra Davidis, p. 226.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 580.

The frequency of eschatological reference in the Psalter, according to Fry's exegesis, may be illustrated by quoting his general comments on the second book, in the Hebrew division :

"In the former book, the personal conflicts and sufferings of our Lord in the days of his flesh, may be called the leading topics of the sacred songs; and his future exaltation and kingdom, when it is mentioned, is mentioned rather as a result and consequence, which is to follow and reward his humiliation and obedience. In the present book, containing the Psalms from the XLIIId to the LXXIId inclusive, the conflicts of the church in the latter days, and the glorious scenes of the second advent, are more immediately the objects in view; and though the great Advocate on one occasion, Psalm LXIX. glances at the circumstance of his passion, to account for the forlorn condition of the Jews; yet the sacred theme ever transports us to the eve of Messiah's appearing; when the expectation of his kingdom is becoming stronger and stronger in the breasts of his waiting people."<sup>1</sup>

In turn, Bayford claims, in Messiah's Kingdom, "About sixty of the Psalms have a direct reference to the fact of the second coming."<sup>2</sup> He lists, with annotations, seventeen of them, and at Ps. 102 he remarks, "Psalm cii requires to be particularly noticed. It is written as a dialogue in which Jehovah, in answer to the supplication of Messiah in the flesh, declares to him the glories which await him, when his kingdom shall be established on the earth in the latter day."<sup>3</sup> It is possible to view the development of the eschatological millenarian reading of this Psalm. Matthew Henry, who, I think, may be taken as offering a "mainstream" comment, says that whatever the precise origin of Ps. 102 - whether written by David during Absalom's rebellion, or by a prophet for the use of his contemporaries of the Captivity -

"'Tis clear by the Application of V. 25, 26. to CHRIST, Heb. i. 11, 12. that the Psalm has reference to the days of the Messiah, and speaks either of his Affliction, or of the Afflictions of his Church for his sake. In the Psalm we have, (1.) A sorrowful Complaint which the Psalmist makes either for himself, or in the name of the Church, of great Afflictions, which were very pressing, V. 1, 11. (2.) Seasonable Comfort fetch'd in against

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> Messiah's Kingdom, p. 19.



these Grievances, (1.) From the Eternity of GOD, V. 12, 23, 27. (2.) From a believing Prospect of the Deliverance which GOD would in due time work for his afflicted Church, V. 13, - 22. and the continuance of it in the World, V. 28." <sup>1</sup>

Bishop Horsley, in the two-volume posthumous work edited by H. Horsley and entitled The Book of Psalms, Translated from the Hebrew: with Notes, Explanatory and Critical (1815),<sup>2</sup> summarizes Ps. 102 as "Prayer and lamentation of a believer, in the time of the last anti-christian persecution".<sup>3</sup> An advance, here, in eschatological precision. John Fry, in Lyra Davidis, published four years later, argues that the suppliant must be Christ, and explains, in connexion with vv. 13-14,

"The deliverance of Jerusalem shall be, we are told, when 'his [Christ's] servants delight in her ruins, and regard her dust with favour'. Who are his servants, when Judah is an outcast, but his people among the Gentiles? O, may we not hope that the great interest which this glorious land is beginning to excite in the breast of Christians, forebodes the season when the Redeemer shall come to Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob?"

All believers are interested in the restoration of Zion; for, in connection with the events of that restoration, as we have repeatedly gathered from the word of prophecy, is the coming of Jesus Christ in his glory, and the establishment of his promised kingdom."<sup>4</sup>

In the Introduction to his translation, Fry agrees in advance that his eschatological interpretation of so many Psalms is relatively novel; yet, he urges, one must expect knowledge of unnoticed details in prophetic Scripture to increase as the End approaches (a reference to Dan. 12 : 4, a text much quoted by the exegetes), and, he says, "I am happy ... in some of the more perilous departures from opinions now received, to be able to adduce ancient authorities, and to claim, for the general principle of the following Exposition, the sanction

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<sup>1</sup> An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments, 6 vols. (London, 1707-21), vol. [iii] (1710) (unpaginated), at heading of Ps. 102.

<sup>2</sup> London.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. ii, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> p. 432.

of an eminent Prelate, who stands at the head of modern commentators on the Sacred Volume."<sup>1</sup> He then directs the reader to Horsley's book.

A statistic may close this appendage. Baysford cites seventeen Psalms as eschatological; of these Horsley explicitly pronounces nine eschatological, and Fry sixteen.<sup>2</sup>

#### D. Romantic eschatology: Lewis Way

Premillennialist theology at its most Romantic was Irvings; but the most Romantic life of any premillennialist theologian was Lewis Way's.

Educated at Eton and Oxford, and from a strict Evangelical background, Way (1779-1840) wished to become a clergyman, but was obliged instead to qualify for the Bar. Nevertheless, a stranger who noticed that Way's surname was also his own, sounded him out and found him conscientious and loyal. The stranger was John Way, a money-careful Methodist who "had been for over 40 years the confidential clerk and agent"<sup>3</sup> of Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, and was later in the service of Mansfield's nephew, who was also Mansfield's heir. At his death John Way left Lewis Way £300,000. He gave up the law and bought Stansted Park, an elegant house (since burnt down) in Sussex, about three miles north of Emsworth. He wondered what to do with the considerable balance of his fortune. The answer came as

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<sup>1</sup> Lyra Davidis, vol. i, pp. iii-iv.

<sup>2</sup> Additional Note:- Nothing I have read in Horsley would stamp him as an emphatic premillennialist; yet statements here and there in his posthumously-published letters and papers are scarcely capable of other than a premillennialist construction. E.g. Letter VI of the 'Manuscript Letters of Bishop Horsley', British Magazine, 6 (1834), 10-17, refers to "the consolation arising from the expectation ... that our Lord is coming to set all things to rights, and that the afflictions of the church, grievous as they have been, and grievous as they yet may be, will terminate in a period of peace and security in this world, to be succeeded by the happiness of the future life" (pp. 10-11). This was a statement of 25 July 1797.

<sup>3</sup> A.M.W. Stirling, The Ways of Yesterday (London, 1930), p. 91. My account of Lewis Way is based on this book, which the British Library has catalogued under "Pickering, A.M.W."

a result of a ride near Exmouth in 1811. His companion pointed out some oak trees, saying that they were legally protected, the late owner's will having declared, "These oaks shall remain standing, and the hand of man shall not be raised against them till Israel returns and is restored to the Land of Promise."<sup>1</sup> However true the spirit of this story of a clause in a will may have been, given the attitude of the testatrix, the clause never, in fact, existed; but Way accepted the story and took it as a sign of how he should spend his money. He discovered the existence of a missionary society to the Jews, paid its large debts, took it over, and made very considerable personal exertions on its behalf. He even travelled to put his case for the Jews' welfare and eschatological destiny to the Czar Alexander I, who was favourably impressed and induced Way to plead for the amelioration of the state of the Jews before no less august a gathering than the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle (1818). He did so with gratifying success, a general endorsement of his pleas being signed by Metternich, Richelieu, Castlereagh, Wellington, Hardenberg, Bernstorff, Nesselrode, and Capodistrias.<sup>2</sup> At length a furore blew up - in England, ironically - about the inclusion of Way's premillennialist eschatology in the Jewish missionary endeavour: would it not be more diplomatic to leave aside such secondary and private opinions liable to irritate converts, and concentrate on basic Christianity (as it appeared to be) ? Way gave up his vice-presidency, though he continued to support the society; and when (very remarkably) a fresh, though lesser, windfall was left him, he established an English church in Paris, where he laboured until serious loss of health enforced his retirement to Leamington Spa. He died there.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> The general endorsement, with the names of the signatories, is printed in Way's The Latter Rain; with Observations on the Importance of General Prayer for the Special Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (London, 1821), pp. 55n.-6n.

Way was perhaps the best-known premillennialist between Hales and Irving. In 1820-2 he contributed, under the pseudonym "Basilicus", a series of eight letters to The Jewish Expositor, which was the Jews' Society journal.<sup>1</sup> These were the letters whose novelty struck William Burgh when the subject of the personal reign was attracting his own interest. They were also cited by Irving in his 'Preliminary Discourse' to Lacunza as independent work supporting his own and Lucunza's premillennialism.<sup>2</sup> Way's series was entitled 'Thoughts on the Scriptural Expectations of the Christian Church'. At the outset he interprets the profanities of his age as having eschatological significance. There is an obvious reference to the numerous current prosecutions for blasphemous libel, especially those against Richard Carlile. Newman, we remember, was appalled by Carlile; and any futurist might have written what Way, in fact, wrote about the situation :

"While under the awful circumstances of the present day, the secular arm is constrained to interpose to stop (if possible) the mouth of blasphemy, the spiritual mind cannot but discern in existing facts a new developement of the mystery of iniquity, by so near an approach towards a renunciation of all authority, human and divine. Support and consolation under such an appalling prospect can alone proceed from an anticipation derived from the word of truth, that when iniquity abounds to the full, the transgressors shall themselves be 'brought to desolation in a moment, and be utterly consumed with terrors'. Another mystery will receive a simultaneous accomplishment and issue in the renovation of a distracted world, and the triumphant establishment of the kingdom of God." <sup>3</sup>

The series tries to demonstrate from Scripture the soundness of the premillennialist hope, literally interpreted and with a reference to earth rather than heaven. "Basilicus", like Bayford, sets out the

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<sup>1</sup> The references for the eight are: vol. 5 (1820), 24-30, 59-68, 139-46; 6 (1821), 57-62, 102-12, 184-92; 7 (1822), 129-37, 199-209.

<sup>2</sup> Coming of Messiah, p. xx.

<sup>3</sup> Jewish Expositor, 5 (1820), p. 24.

postmillennialist position he is attacking. "The most prevailing idea", he says, "is, that a great extention of the spiritual kingdom of Christ will take place towards the close of the Christian dispensation, at the end of which Christ will appear in person as the Judge of quick and dead, when the general resurrection, the dissolution of the material universe, the condemnation of the wicked, and the translation of the church to the glories of heaven will take place together."<sup>1</sup> Instead, so Way argues, "The present system, secular and ecclesiastical, (as far at least as Christendom and the Roman and Mahometan empires are concerned) will pass away at the close of a certain period or aera of the world, fixed in the determinate counsel of God."<sup>2</sup> The Bible tells us the signs by which the approach of this revolution may be perceived. A vast change "in the physical and moral, secular and spiritual state of the world" will then be effected, signified by such scriptural expressions as "a new creation", "a new earth", "making all things new", and "restoring all things".<sup>3</sup> Christ will appear in person; the saints will be raised to new, embodied life (the literal first resurrection); all nations will serve Christ as their King; the Jews will be restored to Palestine; "Babylon" will have been destroyed; the Sabbatical Year, the Jubilee, and the Feast of Tabernacles will at last receive their Christian counterpart or fulfilment.

Way specifically attempts to put missionary endeavour into what he regards as its proper perspective. There will be no conversion of the world before the Parousia.

"There are two, and only two primary scriptural expectations prior to the great consummation. One is,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 140-1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

the destruction of Babylon, and the other, the restoration of Israel. The practical consideration of these two would suffice, if duly enforced, to regulate not only the current of public opinion, but the course of Christian duty. It would give a specific and peculiar efficacy to those missionary labours, by which the remnant according to the election of grace, is to be gathered in; it would accelerate the last universal publication of the gospel, to be made, as 'A WITNESS' to all nations."<sup>1</sup> What is to happen as a result of this publication will (it seems) be the "conviction" of the world, not its "conversion".<sup>2</sup>

Way quotes, "When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?" His answer is negative. Irving was to take this view of mission. Way also published, among other works, The Latter Rain ... (1821). It throws further light on his premillennialism and its theological context. The former rain, in Palestine, fell about seed-time, and the latter prior to the harvest. "Rain", Way points out, "is used in Scripture in a spiritual or figurative sense for the communication of the word and gracious influences of the Spirit to the church."<sup>3</sup> The latter rain appears the more important, since it brought the crop to fruition. On the imagery of harvest Way quotes Horsley: "The harvest is the constant image of that season when God will gather his elect from the four winds of heaven, reap the field of the world, gather his wheat into his barns, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire; - images, which relate not to the translation of the just to heaven, and the burning of the wicked in hell; but to the placing of the faithful in a state of peace and security on earth, and to the excision of the incorrigible of the irreligious faction."<sup>4</sup> Horsley, he continues, had also said that the harvest-time is "that period, when a renewed preaching of the Gospel shall take place in all parts of the world, of which THE CONVERSION

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 7 (1822) p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The Latter Rain, p. xi.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.

OF THE JEWS will perhaps be the first effect".<sup>1</sup> So, Way claims, the latter rain will lead to the harvest, and harvest-time will see Israel's restoration and (according to the prophecies) "the second advent, or manifestation of Christ to his ancient people".<sup>2</sup> The former rain (spiritually understood) was at Pentecost. The entire Church should now pray for the latter rain, "which signifies a special outpouring of the Spirit, and communication of the Word of God to the Jews".<sup>3</sup>

"As Jews were the seedsmen, so Jews will be the harvest-men of the Gospel."<sup>4</sup> Without naming him, Way refers critically to James Haldane Stewart's call for special prayer for a general outpouring of the Spirit: "A most pious, but, as it may appear, premature attempt, is now making, to stir up the Church, and the whole Christian community, to 'special prayer for THE general outpouring of the Holy Spirit'".<sup>5</sup> The scriptural position, Way argues, is that the general outpouring is contingent upon a previous special outpouring, and that special prayer must be directed to a particular promise; therefore the Church must pray for a special outpouring on the Jews.

Again and again in studying Way, there comes a sensation of déjà vu. Hearing his talk of the missionary office of the Jews, one feels never far from Whitby on the same subject. Moreover, Way, who cites Jonathan Edwards as an influence on his own ideas, reproduces Edwards's line that God has connected the promise of the Holy Spirit's outpouring with the restoration of Israel;<sup>6</sup> and Edwards was a post-

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. xv.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. xxvii.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. xxiv.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 6. Way's "Advertisement to the Reader" mentions (ibid., p. /iii/ a publication called Thoughts on the Importance of Special Prayer for the General Outpouring of the Holy Spirit; this was by Stewart.

<sup>6</sup> Way has seized upon Edwards's use of Rom. 11 in his Humble Attempt; see Way, The Latter Rain, pp. 38-9, 44.

millennialist. Just as it is possible, on the odd occasion, to see futurism as a development from within historicism, so it is also possible (even for non-Hegelians !) to view Way's philosemitic pre-millennialism as, in some respects at least, a legacy from post-millennialism, Froom's book notwithstanding !

E. Romantic eschatology: Edward Irving

Curiously - perhaps we should say "Romantically" - Field-Marshall Wade, who had aroused Bishop Newton to compose his Dissertations on the Prophecies, played, although remotely, a further part in our story. The roads he built enabled Highlanders to travel south. One of the various results of this unprecedented mobility was the acquisition, through a subscription list opened in 1809, of premises to be used as a Gaelic Chapel in Cross Street, Hatton Garden, near the present Farringdon underground station. This outpost of the Kirk was dedicated in 1813, and came to be denominated the Caledonian Church.<sup>1</sup> To this small and struggling cause Edward Irving was called in 1822, the third of its line of settled ministers. He was a native of Annan, Dumfriesshire, and, like G.S. Faber, of part-Huguenot descent. He had graduated at Edinburgh and been a schoolmaster at Haddington and Kirkcaldy, and, immediately before coming to London, had been assisting Thomas Chalmers - later a leader in the Disruption - in his parish-experiment in Glasgow, where visiting was systematic and the parochial offerings were made to support an embryo social security system. The Caledonian Church was Irving's first cure, to which he was now ordained, having previously been only a licensed preacher; and he was to scorch this church's name into history. His

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<sup>1</sup> I have used the account of the origin of the Caledonian church given by George G. Cameron, The Scots Kirk in London (Oxford, 1979), pp. 103-6. Cameron acknowledges the influence of Wade's roads in promoting the southward movement of Highlanders.



big, handsome appearance and his dramatic eloquence made an uncommon impression. A remark by George Canning in the House of Commons about the rare quality of his preaching prompted others to hear him. He soon attracted vast congregations. Among his auditors were Godwin, Hazlitt, Macaulay, Bentham, Brougham, Sir James Graham, and Lord Liverpool. Another was S.T. Coleridge. A more ample building in Regent Square was dedicated in 1827. This too was quickly filled; but the shadows were gathering around Irving. His tolerance of glossolalic utterances, which he obdurately held to be inspired "tongues", in his congregation led to his dismissal for infringement of the trust deed, which prescribed that only the Kirk's forms of worship should be used; and at Annan, his home parish, he was subsequently unfrocked for alleged Christological heresy. Some of the many who followed him from Regent Square were reconstituted as the Catholic Apostolic Church ("Irvingites"), in which he was finally permitted to hold office as an "angel". The effective leadership of the new Christian body went to others, notably the wealthy, influential, domineering, and fanatical Henry Drummond, who had once been characterized by Irving (acutely and almost prophetically) as "in all chairs": "Henry Drummond was in the chair; he is in all chairs - I fear for him. His words are more witty than spiritual."<sup>1</sup> By 1834, at the age of 42, Irving was dead. Perhaps, whatever his somatic disorder, he had been torn apart by what is now called a "mid-life crisis", which the creative not infrequently fail to survive.

That Irving was a great Christian scarcely admits of doubt. The confidential letter-journal intended for his wife (a most valuable MS. printed by Mrs. Oliphant in her biography of Irving) would by

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Oliphant, Life of Irving, vol. i, p. 343.

itself be enough to justify this assessment.<sup>1</sup> He was, indeed, committed to God and devoted to man, and he hoped and trusted in Christ, whose reality he knew for himself and strove incessantly to recover for the Church. Nevertheless, as a theologian he was not in the highest class. He had remarkable insights, it is true;<sup>2</sup> but lacked the greatest logical and analytic ability. An illustration may be drawn from music. He felt called upon to be a Beethoven; sometimes he achieved the quality of a Schubert; but much more often he attained the compositional level of a Paganini, whose charisma and virtuosity he shared, and for whom (symbolically) he was sometimes actually mistaken.

Irving's basic eschatological scheme was openly, confessedly, and gratefully derived from Hatley Frere, whose influence upon the Scot will be discussed below. It was eclectic, a post-1789 development of the traditional Protestant paradigm, and is set out in Irving's Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed of God: a Discourse on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse which relate to the Second Advent. The four Danielic empires, we have to report once more, were those of Babylon, Persia, Macedonia, and Rome. The little horn of the fourth beast was the Papal power; and the Papacy had brought the Church into one of its three captivities, the others being those engineered by the Muslims and the modern infidels. The Papacy captured

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<sup>1</sup> See ibid., pp. 249-375. The journal proper begins at p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> One thinks of his Christology, appreciated by Barth: Church Dogmatics, translated by G.T. Thomson and others, 13 vols. (Edinburgh, 1936-69), vol. i, 2nd.  $\frac{1}{2}$ -vol., translated by G.T. Thomson and Harold Knight (1956), p. 154. Then again, it was Irving who counselled adventist Protestants to "work the mine of the Papacy" (Last Days, p. 544), and who regretted that failure to do this at the time of the Reformation meant that Protestantism merely denied Purgatory, instead of going "into the whole question of a Christian's hope" (ibid., p. 543). To be sure, Irving's context is limited - adventism and the idea that Providence has permitted the Papacy to be in some ways an antetype of Christ's coming Kingdom - but the advice would appear to be of general application.

its victim in 533, with Justinian's code; it lost it in 1792, when the vials began to be poured out on the Romish interests and it was fatally stricken by infidelity. The beast from the bottomless pit, the spirit of infidelity, slew the two witnesses, the Old and New Testaments. In 1797 they were raised: there is much evidence of this resurrection, as in the appearance of more translations and of Bible societies. This third captivity of the Church must last for 30 years plus an unknown portion of a further forty-five, possibly ending in 1848. The reign of Christ actually started in 1792. True worship will be restored in Jerusalem in 1847, when the 2,400 years will expire; but before then a new "incarnation" (so to speak) of infidelity will rule for a time over the Roman Empire, a new Napoleon.

There will be a resurrection at the start of the millennium, when, also, the Jews will be restored.

The remarkable 'Preliminary Discourse' to Lacunza somewhat develops this basic scheme. In it Irving insists that the empirical Church will "be clean dissolved" in a "deluge of wrath"<sup>1</sup> because of her breaches of covenant (Isa. 24). (In other words, his attitude to the Church now looks dangerously sectarian.<sup>2</sup>) During this season of judgement, God will use true Christian Gentiles, Elijah, and various signs to convert the Jews in a vast outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (Back again through Way to Whitby !) In another observation which seems to show Lewis Way's influence, Irving adds, "This outpouring of the

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<sup>1</sup> Coming of Messiah, vol. i, p. v.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the rabid sectarianism of Irving's three-part article 'An Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse', Morning Watch, 5 (1832), 306-25; 6 (1833), 18-44, 262-85. Page 24 of the second instalment declares, "It is so beyond a question, that the great body, almost the whole, of the churches of Christ in this land, where I believe the sealing chiefly proceedeth, have within these few years declared themselves to be haters of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, denying his work in the flesh, his work in the Spirit, and the hope of his coming in glory to reign on the earth." "Babylon" he calls them (6, pp. 269, 283).

Spirit, is known in Scripture by 'the latter rain', of which I deem the religious revivals of the last thirty years to be as the first droppings of the shower, and ... it will be given to those who will receive it, both Gentiles and Jews."<sup>1</sup> This gift will touch off the last great persecutions, aimed at the Jewish converts as well as the Gentile Church. Antichrist, nevertheless, will be vanquished at Armageddon. The completion of these judgements, the raising of the Christian dead, the transformation of living Christians, and the restoration of Israel, will be performed by Christ in person, who will then begin his millennial reign on earth.

One may describe Irving's eschatology in some such way as this without conveying his essence as a divine at all. The essential Irving is not simply Frere's pathetic debtor, or simply another millennialist, or simply an incipient major sectary. Certainly he was these things, but the Irving whose eschatological theology was like some pyrotechnic rocket rushing up into an apocalyptically dark sky, radiating strange colours as it spectacularly burst, scattering hot sparks which glow even today - this Irving was fundamentally a Romantic theologian, in revolt against minimizing, staleness, deadness. It was the Romantic Irving who, even at Haddington, was almost drunk with the vision of the eschatological rule of men and women as saints in heaven :

"Social supper parties" ... "were much the custom at this time in Haddington, and the hospitalities generally extended far into the night. At these social meetings Irving was occasionally in the habit of broaching some of his singular opinions about the high destinies of the human race in heaven, where the saints were not only to be made 'kings and priests unto God,' but were to rule and judge angels. Dr. Lorimer (the senior minister of the town) used to hint that there were many more profitable and useful subjects in the New Testament for a divinity student to occupy his thoughts about than such speculations; but Irving was not to be put down in this way. 'Dare

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<sup>1</sup> Coming of Messiah, vol. i, p. v.

either you or I deprive God of the glory and thanks due to his name for this exceeding great reward ?' cried the impetuous young man." <sup>1</sup>

It was the Romantic Irving, his imagination having early been fed on the stories of the Covenanters, who wished that he had lived in Scotland at the time of the Reformation.<sup>2</sup> It was the Romantic Irving who, preaching before the London Missionary Society, and so entranced that he ignored niceties of tact, the usual limits of a congregation's endurance, and the opportunity to request funds for a worthy cause, publicly castigated the mundane view of missionary work and called instead for "Missionaries after the Apostolic School". It was the Romantic Irving who saw himself as conducting an epic personal struggle to bring the Church to awareness of the need for a premillennialist eschatology, the Irving who having wandered on to an exposition of his doctrine in a Christmas Day sermon of 1826 - a sermon intended to be merely conventional - tells us, "Having broken ground in this great controversy, I found it necessary to maintain myself, and to that end took up certain great and strong positions which seemed to me the keys of the whole debatable land."<sup>3</sup> "Maintain myself"; "great and strong positions"; "the keys to ... the land": this is the language of knight-errantry or generalship.

Finally, and poignantly, it was the Romantic Irving, in the profoundest and most serious sense of that word, who, having watched alone over his dying infant son Edward, and then over his body, attained as by revelation to a new vision of Christ as offering life, when the customary theology of the Church seemed to have resigned itself to the prevalence of death :

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Oliphant, Life of Irving, vol. i, pp. 44-5.

<sup>2</sup> Irving, Last Days, p. 422. Cf. Coming of Messiah, pp. xxiv-xxv.

<sup>3</sup> Coming of Messiah, p. iv.

"Why should not I speak of thee, my Edward !  
seeing it was in the season of thy sickness and death,  
the Lord did reveal in me the knowledge and hope and  
desire of his Son from heaven ? Glorious exchange !  
He took my son to his own more fatherly bosom, and  
revealed in my bosom the sure expectation and faith of  
his own eternal Son !" <sup>1</sup>

"That was the blessed aera when, to me, the light of this  
blessed morning star brake through the clouds in which  
the church is presently shrouded up. I prayed God to  
avenge me of death. I have sought diligently ever since  
to fight against Satan, the Prince of darkness. The  
Lord hath given me no mean success, blessed be his name.  
And while I live I will fight against death that so  
bereft me. And I will conquer him when we come to mortal  
battle; and I will reign with him under my feet; because  
I have made the Lord my refuge, and the Holy One my  
habitation." <sup>2</sup>

These are great words, moving and historically significant. Earlier  
the exegete Henry Kett had condemned, as hard to picture and offering  
the prospect of eternal happiness at a remote distance only, the  
common teaching of his time about the post-mortem state. "The sensual  
Paradise of Mahomet, and the Purgatory of Antichristian Rome have in  
fact", he declared, "operated more forcibly upon the hopes and fears of  
man, than the distant view of the Eternal Beatific Vision, after the  
sleep of the soul till the day of judgment." <sup>3</sup> In "the purest ages of  
the Church", <sup>4</sup> by contrast, believers had anticipated that they would  
at once join Christ and "the society of blessed spirits". <sup>5</sup> The idea  
of the sleep of the soul, this apparent hiatus in one's existence, Kett  
called "this chilling opinion", <sup>6</sup> "the brutalizing doctrine". <sup>7</sup> The

"antidote, as I humbly conceive, will be found in the  
Scriptural doctrine of a Millennium, which includes the  
belief of immediate admission into a state of happiness  
previous to the resurrection of the body, and of an  
inconceivable increase of bliss and glory when the day of  
final judgment shall arrive". <sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. lxxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. clxxii.

<sup>3</sup> History the Interpreter of Prophecy, 3rd. edn., 2 vols. (London, 1800),  
p. 360.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 361.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 362.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Again,

/ James Haldane Stewart in 1825 (the same year as Irving's bereavement)

had criticized the use of death as religious consolation, and, like

Irving, had sought an alternative at once life-affirming and scriptural:

the Second Advent, indeed :

"Our great consolation to distressed Christians is, the comfort that death will relieve them from all their sorrows, and bring their happy spirits to the presence of the Lord. This is our constant course of alleviation ... But this was not the Apostolic mode. We may not, perhaps, have noticed this; but such is the fact, that death is very rarely introduced by the Apostles in the way of consolation: their comfort was, 'the coming of the Lord'."<sup>1</sup>

Stewart then cites Rom. 8 : 18, Col. 3 : 4, and Heb. 10 : 37. Yet in Irving there is an additional factor: a peculiarly individual and vehement religious passion.<sup>2</sup> In this sense he is nearer to Blake than to Stewart. True, he did not solve the theological problems he had become so existentially aware of. His first book had, in 1823, considered the probable nature of the intermediate state of the soul, with some interesting positive results.<sup>3</sup> By 1826, in the 'Preliminary Dissertation', now a premillennialist and also convinced that the Second Advent and the resurrection were both at hand, he virtually threw away the theology of the intermediate state of the soul as speculative and depressing. Hatley Frere's historicist scheme,

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<sup>1</sup> A Practical View of the Redeemer's Advent (London, 1825), pp. 135-6.

<sup>2</sup> This passion was another of his Romantic traits, of course. There had been an apology for religious passion as long ago as in the Night Thoughts : e.g. (Night IV)

"Think you my song too turbulent ? too warm ?  
Are passions, then, the pagans of the soul ?  
Reason alone baptiz'd ? alone ordain'd  
To touch things sacred ? Oh for warmer still !"

(Poetical Works of Young, vol. i, p. 71.)

<sup>3</sup> Irving reasoned, (claiming N.T. confirmation) that (e.g.) the discarnate soul will be occupied with the future and the past, inflicting, in connexion with the latter, severer self-judgements than previously; that the soul thus immediately enters a preliminary paradise or hell; and that, it again follows, the greater our established virtue, the easier will be our post-mortem condition. For the Oracles of God, Four Orationes. For Judgment to Come, an Argument, in Nine Parts, 2nd. edn. (preferable because of small but considered revisions) (London, 1823), pp. 286-317.

which strongly influenced Irving into believing that the End must be near, and which now looks obviously time-bound, merely ingenious, mostly hackneyed, an easy target for Maitland, simply collapsed, a wrong analysis and a failed prediction. And although Irving might dismiss the theology of the intermediate condition, yet, as W.H. Oliver has recently commented, "A critic could suggest that as some Christian souls have been waiting in this meagre condition as Irving saw it for eighteen centuries, the intermediate state, however attenuated, is important enough to be reckoned with, and that theories about Christian expectation should take it into account"<sup>1</sup> - a point Oliver goes on to develop. Ironically, the only apparent progress moderns have made in this matter of post-mortem Christian life has been through investigations into precisely this intermediate state: I refer to the researches set on a formal footing when F.W.H. Myers, Henry Sidgwick, and others founded the Society for Psychical Research in 1882. But there is little enough we could tell Irving about the problems of death and the Parousia; and we have lost his passion. This personal religious passion of Irving's - this Romantic passion - shows the vast distance travelled from the Augustan period. As W.R. Fryer has written,

"The 'reason', the 'good sense' and the conventions which the Grande Siècle and the Augustan age prescribed were the products of traditional authorities, political, social and ecclesiastical, and represented the concept of a cultural unity imposed from above.

It appears, therefore, to be no accident, that whereas a French critic of the Grande Siècle had coined the maxim 'le moi est haïssable', and that very Augustan character, Lord Chesterfield, deprecated, more than any other fault of conduct, the expression of any kind of singularity or eccentricity, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, followed in this by so many figures of note in the subsequent history of Romanticism, flaunted a deliberate and highly egotistical eccentricity."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Prophets and Millennialists (Auckland, 1978), p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> 'Romantic Literature and the European Age of Revolutions', Renaissance and Modern Studies, 8 (1964), 53-74 (p. 57).



For Irving, Rousseau was "that eminent servant of the beast from the bottomless pit"<sup>1</sup> - a verdict to delight modern educators maddened by his influence - but they both represented Romantic individuality. Irving had an inner life comparable (roughly) to Wordsworth's in The Prelude; and, like Wordsworth, he accepted its insights and actually published them, as in the case of his revelation after the death of Edward. Irving saw Providence working in his life, and no one ever wrote such biographically interesting prefaces.

#### F. Influences on Irving's eschatology

Lewis Way's influence on Irving may be discerned as operating in various directions. Way's living Romantically may well have strengthened Irving's tendency to adopt a dramatic self-estimate. Again, Irving has been seen to quote the idea of "the latter rain". There is a similarity, too, in their ideas of mission; and Way may have made the word "dispensation" popular with Irving: I have counted nineteen occurrences of it in the course of the "Basilicus" letters.

The person whose influence is the best-documented is James Hatley Frere. This long-lived premillennialist exegete (1779-1866) was a son of the antiquary and landowner John Frere, and brother of the wit, diplomat, and friend of Canning, John Hookham Frere. In some ways it is not hard to understand Hatley Frere's influence on Irving. As a scion of a distinguished and influential family; pious, educated at a public school and the Royal Military Academy; a veteran student of prophecy; an officer, at one time, in the Royal Artillery; later a rising civil servant in the Army Pay Office; mentally ingenious; a lucid writer with a substantial historicist study to his credit; a gentleman in his forties when he met Edward Irving<sup>2</sup> -

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<sup>1</sup> Irving, Last Days, p. 85; Rousseau's particular offence had been to deny that parents should direct the religious faith of their children (ibid., pp. 84-5).

<sup>2</sup> On Frere's life see George Goodwin in DNB, and J.G.F. [Jasper Gray Frere], Frere of Suffolk and Norfolk from 1275-1965 (printed at Crowthorne, Berks., 1965), Ch. 7 (unpaginated).

was it not likely that he would impress the earnest, provincial, deferential, and almost deracinated young Scot ? Withal Irving was desirous of instruction. Frere drew him into that fantastic gallery of competing and evolving surrealisms, all based on the inverted pyramid of the Median paradigm, just when Maitland was about to serve a closure-order on it. Irving actually got to know of Maitland's First Enquiry, rejected its thesis, remarking (for instance), "I have thought this matter [of the year-day business] so completely set at rest by Mede, and Henry More, and the common consent of those who have written since, as not to need any demonstration."<sup>1</sup>

To Carlyle, Frere was a fool with a ruinous influence over Irving.<sup>2</sup> To Irving, Frere was a deeply Christian exegete whom he was proud to own as a master in prophecy. He dedicated, in fact, his first prophetic work, Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed, to Frere. He did this with what in the circumstances was a pathetic and frightening humility. He described their first meeting, when at Irving's suggestion they walked in the fields to "commune together", leaving the rest of the company in "social converse"; "you [Frere] seemed to me", says Irving, "as one who dreamed, while you opened in my ear your views of the present times, as foretold in the book of Daniel and the Apocalypse. But being ashamed of my own ignorance, and having been blessed from my youth with the desire of instruction, I dared not to scoff at what I heard, but resolved to consider the matter."<sup>3</sup> Irving then recites how more than a year later they met again, "at the house of the same dear friend and brother in the Lord [Way ?]", when Frere answered Irving's objections to his scheme and

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<sup>1</sup> Coming of Messiah, vol. i, p. xxx.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Carlyle, Reminiscences, ed. James Anthony Froude, 2 vols. (London, 1881), vol. i, pp. 282-3.

<sup>3</sup> Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed, Dedication, vol. i, p. [v].

seemed withal such "a calm and sincere believer in truth".<sup>1</sup> At length Irving presented himself to Frere and (he says) "offered myself as your pupil".<sup>2</sup> He confesses that he was at first disinclined to accept the whole Mede-Frere outlook upon the Apocalypse; but eventually he did so. Amazingly (to us), if touchingly, Irving declares that his desire to acknowledge his debt to Frere in his book is prompted by a feeling of religious unworthiness: "I am not willing that any one should account of me, as if I were worthy to have had revealed to me the important truths contained in this discourse, which may all be found written in your Treatise on the Prophecies of Daniel: only the Lord accounted me worthy to receive the faith of those things, which he had first made known to you, his more worthy servant."<sup>3</sup> O sancta simplicitas ! And if Frere could do this to Irving, what could Drummond do ?<sup>4</sup>

Frere's Combined View of the Prophecies of Daniel, Esdras, and St. John, first published in 1815<sup>5</sup> and updated from time to time, may be dismissed quickly. It makes the elderly assumption that the prophecies constitute a problem in science, analogous to the problem posed by the motions of the heavenly bodies: "It is to be regretted", says Frere, "that the Prophetic Writings have been too much considered as the subjects of speculation, rather than as the objects of scientific research."<sup>6</sup> Needless to say, Frere claims to have solved the prophetic problem. In effect, he dragged Mede (and Whiston) into the age of Bonaparte, about whom he made a partly-correct prediction. For in 1815, before Napoleon's escape from Elba, Frere had

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. vii-viii.

<sup>4</sup> H.C. Whitley, Blinded Eagle: an Introduction to the Life and Teaching of Edward Irving (London, 1955), p. 41, asks of Drummond, "Was he in fact Irving's evil genius ?" The answer, as Whitley realizes (ibid.), awaits specific research and would involve sources difficult to retrieve.

<sup>5</sup> London.

<sup>6</sup> Combined View (1815), p. [1]

reckoned that the Corsican might recover his ascendancy and perhaps occupy Rome as the seat of his infidel empire. Nevertheless, Napoleon failed Frere; his role as infidel king remained incompletely filled, and even his son failed Frere too. Irving, as we have seen, was likewise expecting another version of Napoleon to appear; he also took over Frere's interpretation of the Danielic beasts, the little horn of the fourth, and the separate (infidel) identity of the beast from the bottomless pit, not to mention other propositions found in Frere.

On the general question of S.T. Coleridge's overall influence on Irving, there has been no consensus.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately we have merely to look for Coleridgean influence in the matter of eschatological prophecy. Even there, some difficulty arises. Nearly all the statements are from Coleridge's side, and very interesting they are; not much, on the other hand, has survived from Irving's side. Irving's sermon Missionaries after the Apostolical School (1825) is dedicated to Coleridge, and Irving explains that this is because, "You have been more profitable to my faith in orthodox doctrine, to my spiritual understanding of the word of God, and to my right conception of the Christian Church, than any or all of the men with whom I have entertained friendship and conversation."<sup>2</sup> One senses that Irving is probably referring first to a right understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, and last to a more Catholic view of the Church. The middle reference is possibly to the idea of symbolism in the prophecies, but only possibly.

Another statement of indebtedness, this time rather more

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<sup>1</sup> "Some would maintain that Irving gained little from the great philosopher, and went his own determined way, others again claim that throughout this period, Irving was ever drawing from the riches of this remarkable mind." Henry Charles Whitley, 'Edward Irving: an Interpretation of his Life and Teaching' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1953), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Missionaries after the Apostolical School, in The Collected Works of Edward Irving, ed. G. Carlyle, 5 vols. (London, 1864-5), vol. i (1864), pp. [427]- 523 (p. [427]).

obviously related to questions of eschatology, occurs in Irving's 'Preliminary Discourse' to Lacunza's book. He acknowledges that from Coleridge he "received the first idea of the prophetic growth of God's word".<sup>1</sup> What he means by this theological notion is explained at some length further on in the 'Discourse'. The root idea is that Scripture is essentially forward-looking, prophetic. Thus, to cite two famous Old Testament examples, promises concerning their posterity were made both to Abraham and David, although neither lived to see them fulfilled. So too, in the New Testament, there are promises of the Second Advent of Christ. Each such prophetic promise contributes to the full development of the divine plan. Irving draws some significant, and closely related, consequences from this vision of Scripture and history as prophetically dynamic. One is that, in any given epoch of the Church, the individual believer possessed by this understanding, will recognize that his individual circumstances, the state of the Church, and the state of the world, constitute but one aspect "of a great procession of events, whereof the purpose and the issue are both declared".<sup>2</sup> The effect of this recognition, says Irving, will be "to bring the intellect in subordination to the great pervading reason, and the will in subordination to the great pervading will".<sup>3</sup> Another consequence is that, in order that the Church may not lack proper apprehension of its goal - an attitude which Irving described as peculiarly conducive to modern infidelity - there must be an emphatic stress upon the Church's expectation of the Parousia.

A third relevant text is in Mrs. Oliphant's book :

"Here [with Coleridge at Highgate] Irving changed the common superficial idea of the world's conversion - that belief calmly held or earnestly insisted on in

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<sup>1</sup> Coming of Messiah, vol. i, p. lxxv.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. lxxvi.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

the face of acknowledged disappointment in many missionary efforts, and the slowness and lingering issues of even the most successful, which is common to most churches. 'That error,' as he himself says, 'under which almost the whole of the Church is lying, that the present world is to be converted unto the Lord, and so slide by a natural inclination into the Church - the present reign of Satan hastening, of its own accord, into the millennial reign of Christ.' For this doctrine he learnt to substitute the idea of a dispensation drawing towards its close, and - its natural consequence in a mind so full of love to God and man - of an altogether glorious and overwhelming revolution yet to come, in which all the dead society, churches, kingdoms, fashions of this world, galvanically kept in motion until the end, should be finally burned up and destroyed. Whether this development of wistful and anxious faith, and the 'deliverance' conveyed by it - or whether that more subtle view of the ancient and much-assailed Calvinistic doctrine of election, which sets forth God's message and messengers as specially addressed to 'the worthy,' and universally received by them wherever the message is heard - was the substance of what the preacher learned from the poet-philosopher, there is no information. The prodigal thanks with which the teaching was received, given out of the fulness of a heart always ready to exaggerate the benefits conferred upon it, is almost the only distinct record of what passed between them." <sup>1</sup>

This is a somewhat baffling passage. If only the source(s) it is based on were still extant ! Mrs. Oliphant appears to be saying

- (1) that Coleridge persuaded Irving to drop postmillennialism;
- (2) that Irving concluded for himself that the end of the present dispensation would be followed by the destruction (or purging) of the creation, a renewal of it perhaps being implied;
- (3) that whether Irving's principal debt to Coleridge was in eschatology or in election is not a question her material could answer.

If Irving abandoned postmillennialism under Coleridge's influence, we cannot go on to affirm that Coleridge taught him premillennialism. Coleridge expected the winding-up of the present dispensation at the Second Advent, and he envisaged the consummation as the perfection of God's purposes; but, so far from being a pre-

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<sup>1</sup> Life of Irving, vol. i, pp. 190-1.

millennialist, he was, in fact, an Augustinian, believing that the millennium was the period of the Church since Constantine. More so, his reservations about Irving's eschatology are so numerous that, taken together, they amount almost to a total rejection of it.

Let us examine the Coleridgean texts. They tell us, of course, that the philosopher certainly admired Irving enough to compare him with Martin Luther. Kathleen Coburn prints a note of Coleridge's :

"I have no faith in his Irving's prophesyings; small sympathy with his fulminations; and in certain peculiarities of his theological system as distinct from his religious principles, I cannot see my way.

But I hold withal, and not the less firmly for <sup>in our moods and judgements,</sup> these discrepancies that Edward Irving possesses more of the spirit and purposes of the first Reformers, that he has more of the Head and Heart, the Life, the Unction, and the genial Powers of Martin Luther, than any man now alive; yea than any man of this and the last Century." <sup>1</sup>

He also acknowledges, in another note reproduced by the same editor, Irving's love of God. Again, Coleridge wrote, in Aids to Reflection, of Irving as "a mighty Wrestler in the cause of Spiritual Religion and Gospel Morality, in whom more than in any other Contemporary, I seem to see the Spirit of LUTHER revived".<sup>2</sup> Irving is yet again compared with Luther in Coleridge's Church and State. The interpretation of these basic, laudatory comments would seem to be that Coleridge, perhaps initially (or subconsciously) attracted to Irving as an opposite to himself - the effective, systematic man of action - appreciated him as one who could redress the theological imbalance inherited from the eighteenth century, which stressed "reason", evidences, and optimism, and whose outlook at times suggested a certain materialism and lack of moral strenuousness.

Well, he certainly did not admire Irving for his eschatology. In the second of the two volumes edited by Derwent Coleridge in 1853

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<sup>1</sup> Inquiring Spirit (London, 1951), item 226, p. 298.

<sup>2</sup> Aids to Reflection (London, 1825), p. 372n.

under the title Notes on English Divines,<sup>1</sup> is a piece called 'Notes on Irving's Ben-Ezra' (i.e. Lacunza), dated 1827. Here Coleridge makes a formal statement, dated May 1827, of his position regarding Irving's teaching on the Second Advent. He rejects Irving's "positive assurance" even about the points they agree on: "They may be believed, and they may be doubted, salva Catholica fide."<sup>2</sup> "Further, writes Coleridge, "from these points I exclude all prognostications of time and event; the mode, the persons, the places, of the accomplishment; and I decisively protest against all parts of Mr. Irving's and of Lacunza's scheme grounded on the books of Daniel or the Apocalypse, interpreted as either ... Irving or Lacunza ... understands them. Again, I protest against all identification of the coming with the Apocalyptic Millennium, which in my belief began under Constantine."<sup>3</sup> There will, indeed, be a Second Advent, and "the objects of the Christian Redemption will be perfected on this earth"; the Kingdom will be established, and in it "the divine will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven."<sup>4</sup> He rejects such details as "the re-institution of bestial sacrifices in the Temple at Jerusalem";<sup>5</sup> but he states, "I fully agree with Mr. Irving as to the literal fulfilment of all the prophecies which respect the restoration of the Jews. (Deuteron. xxv. 1-8.)"<sup>6</sup> He expected the time to come when Irving would realize that "his system" would have been more impressive and defensible

"had he trusted the proof to Scriptures of undisputed catholicity [i.e. not the Book of Revelation], to the spirit of the whole Bible, to the consonance of the doctrine with the reason, its fitness to the needs and capacities of mankind, and its harmony with the general plan of the divine dealings with the world, - and had left the Apocalypse in the back ground. But alas ! instead of this he has given it such prominence, such prosiliency of relief, that he has made the main strength of his hope appear to rest on a vision, so obscure that his own author and faith's-mate claims a meaning for its contents only on the supposition that the meaning is

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<sup>1</sup> London.

<sup>2</sup> English Divines, vol. ii, p. 336.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 337.



yet to come !"<sup>1</sup>

So much for Lacunza's futurism ! Then, as if Coleridge had not given us surprises enough, he unpacks more. He declines to accept that when John speaks of souls (Rev. 20 : 4) he means bodies. Much more remarkably, he declares, "It is only necessary to know that the whole book [of Revelation] from the first verse to the last is written in symbols, to be satisfied that the true meaning of this passage [20 : 1-7] is simply, that only the great Confessors and Martyrs will be had in remembrance and honour in the Church after the establishment of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire."<sup>2</sup> Later, Coleridge criticizes Lacunza's use of a famous eschatological text, "And then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21 : 27-28). "Coming in a cloud", says Coleridge, is to be understood of Christ as having now become "Providence, - that is, a Divine Power behind the cloudy veil of human agency and worldly events and incidents, controlling, disposing, and directing acts and events to the gradual unfolding and final consummation of the great scheme of Redemption; the casting forth of the evil and alien nature from man, and thus effecting the union of the creature with the Creator, of man with God, in and through the Son of Man, even the Son of God made manifest".<sup>3</sup> Coleridge adds that Matt. 24 makes it certain that "the Son of Man, in fact, came in the utter destruction and devastation of the Jewish Temple and State, during the period from Vespasian to Hadrian, both included;" and he asks "Is it a sufficient reason for our rejecting the teaching of Christ himself, of Christ glorified and in his kingly

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 340.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 346.

character, that his Apostles, who disclaim all certain knowledge of the awful event, had understood his words otherwise, and in a sense more commensurate with their previous notions and the prejudices of their education ?"<sup>1</sup> (The reference must be to the disciples' question to Jesus in Acts 1 : 6, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel ?")

At Lacunza's quotation of 2 Thess. 2 : 1-10 (the "Man of Sin" passage) Coleridge exclaims, "O Edward Irving ! Edward Irving ! by what fascination could your spirit be drawn away from passages like this, to guess and dream over the rhapsodies of the Apocalypse ? For rhapsody, according to your interpretation, the Poem undeniably is ; - though, rightly expounded, it is a well knit and highly poetical evolution of a part of this and our Lord's more comprehensive prediction, Luke xvii."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, Coleridge rubs in his low evaluation of Daniel and the Apocalypse as literal sources for prophetic exegesis by making a remark which approaches a witticism. He exclaims, "What an excellent book would this Jesuit have written, if Daniel and the Apocalypse had not existed, or had been unknown to, or rejected by, him !" <sup>3</sup> Lacunza's excellencies, he suggests, could go in one column, his "puerilities and anilities" into another ; "and this latter column would be found grounded on Daniel and the Apocalypse !" <sup>4</sup>

Coleridge and Irving seem to agree that God's will will be done on earth, and that there will be a Second Advent. This is perhaps important enough, historically, but it does not take us very far. Coleridge may have given Irving the seed for his eschatology, but the luxuriant plant he disowns. Possibly, by and large, it was

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

a question of Coleridge's having to resist Irving's eschatological doctrine rather than of his instructing him.

#### G. Irving's premillennialist influence

Iain H. Murray has traced, in outline, Irving's premillennialist influence in Scotland and England. In Scotland his most celebrated "converts" were Andrew and Horatius Bonar; the work of the latter in particular - his hymns, his treatises, his long editorship of the Quarterly Journal of Prophecy - gained him a discernible following. Irving's influence in England was greater. "One of the first [men] to be gained by Irving", says Murray, "was Henry Drummond (1786-1860)."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the reverse would be truer: Drummond gained Irving, whom he soon superseded in the Catholic Apostolic movement. (A note added at the end of the main part of the 'Preliminary Discourse' to Lacunza describes the inauguration of the fateful conferences held at Drummond's residence, Albury Park.) Even many clergymen who declined to go along with the Irvingites in all their aspects were nonetheless intrigued by the premillennialism to which Irving gave such vivid and repeated expression. Notable among these was Edward Bickersteth (1786-1850), a solicitor turned priest, a tireless worker on behalf of the Church Missionary Society, of which he was secretary. He became, says Murray, "a fluent propagator"<sup>2</sup> of the premillennialist position. Thomas Rawson Birks, Bickersteth's biographer, "was also a prolific writer on the same theme".<sup>3</sup> Murray also refers to the scholarly contributions to the premillennialist cause made by Edward Greswell and by Edward Bishop Elliott, the author of the ponderous, but well-distributed, Horae Apocalypticae, originally published in 1844. Such scholarship, observes Murray, won over some of the coming leaders of Church

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<sup>1</sup> The Puritan Hope, pp. 190-1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Evangelicalism, including J.C.R. Ryle.

How far the originators of the Brethren movement qualify as members of the learned élites with which this dissertation has been mainly concerned is problematical. Scholarship has never deserted the Brethren, but the combination in John Nelson Darby of petty literalism and peculiar theological reveries<sup>1</sup> makes Irving look like an acknowledged doctor of the Church. Howbeit, Murray points out that Lady Powerscourt, who accommodated Irving on his visit to Ireland in 1830, and had been at an Albury Conference, was a contact of Darby's; that "two future leaders among the Brethren, Henry Craik and Anthony Norris Groves, were reading Irving in 1826";<sup>2</sup> and that "all the salient features of Darby's scheme are to be found in Irving: the expectation of impending judgments upon Christendom, the imminence of Christ's advent, his consequent millennial reign upon earth."<sup>3</sup> Even the peculiar idea of the "rapture", the secret Advent effecting the removal of the Church before the tribulation which precedes the End, seems to have originated in Irvingite circles.

The Brethren, as is well known, while retaining premillennialism, came to accept futurism in place of historicism, and to be influential in promoting it.

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<sup>1</sup> Darby taught (e.g.) that the Old Testament is not prophetic of the Church; that Jesus came to be Israel's earthly ruler; that, because he was rejected as such, God instituted the Church as a stop-gap to last until the faithful Christians (quick and dead) are secretly removed from the world by Christ (i.e. "raptured") before the apocalyptic tribulations. Under all this, of course is an egotistic rejection of the authority of Catholic tradition, a thoroughgoing sectarianism, and a failure to comprehend that history is one of the Church's inescapable dimensions. Darby thus fits badly into a line distinguished by men like Bishop Newton, Horsley, G.S. Faber, S.R. Maitland, Todd, and Newman.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, Puritan Hope, p. 286, n. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

### EPILOGUE

With this report of yet another defection from the great Protestant paradigm, the present research must close. Were we to stay with this subject, then arguably our most interesting and pressing task would be to investigate the story of how the paradigm, already wrenched when William Jones of Nayland gave an eschatological role to infidelity, and undermined by the researches of the scholarly futurists, was even more seriously threatened by the severe reassessment of the aims and essential nature of the Book of Revelation as a piece of primitive Christian literature. One notices, in passing, the odd sign of the slow awakening to the fact of the rise of historical criticism. Archdeacon John Chappel Woodhouse, for example, whose diocesan at one period was Richard Hurd, attempted in the year of Trafalgar to answer "the objections of the late Professor J.D. Michaelis".<sup>1</sup> Now that is a portentous name to end with.

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<sup>1</sup> The Apocalypse, or Revelation of Saint John, Translated; with Notes, Critical and Explanatory. To which is prefixed a Dissertation on the Divine Origin of the Book; in Answer to the Objections of the late Professor J.D. Michaelis (London, 1805).

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